Contributing to learning to change: developing an action learning peer support group of professionals to investigate ways of improving their own professional practice

Dianne Allen
University of Wollongong
CONTRIBUTING TO LEARNING TO CHANGE:

Developing an action learning peer support group of professionals to investigate ways of improving their own professional practice

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION (HONOURS)

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Dianne Allen

BSc(GenSc), Dip.Ed., Master of Dispute Resolution with Honours, Master of Education in Adult Education

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
2004
**CONTRIBUTING TO LEARNING TO CHANGE**

**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The Context – Contributing to Learning to Change</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Focusing – Inquiry questions and inquiry processes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Developing professional practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Recent focusing of my interest</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 My argument in overview</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Presentation issues</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 SETTING THE SCENE</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Reflective research in context</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Areas of work required to develop reflective research</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Personal relatability of Kressel’s concept</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 ‘Practical’ concerns</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 PLANNING THE ACTION</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Design in broad terms – Description and rationale</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Particulars of the design – Description and rationale</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 How I sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the design</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Planning to test the design in action</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 CONDUCTING THE IN-ACTION TESTING</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Enacting the proposed evaluation design</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Data gathering process</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Data analysis process</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Story construction process</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Which cut of the possible stories?</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Limitations</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Reflections on the processing-to-report phase of my inquiry</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 TWO ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES ............................................................. 77
Overview ........................................................................................................ 77
5.1 Design in-action for groups of professionals ............................................. 77
5.2 Case 1 – Adult Basic Education Teachers Group ....................................... 78
5.3 Case 2 – Community Nursing Health Services Group ............................... 88
Summary ..................................................................................................... 99

6 DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE – DESIGN IN ACTION ...................................... 100
Overview .................................................................................................... 100
6.1 Change in self-awareness ........................................................................ 101
6.2 Change in other-awareness .................................................................... 106
6.3 Change in awareness about group and group processes ........................... 110
6.4 Change in reflective work ...................................................................... 112
6.5 Change in thinking about thinking ......................................................... 115
6.6 Change on taking action (action learning) ................................................. 118
6.7 Designer-Facilitator experience of change on these dimensions ............... 124
6.8 Participants’ perspectives on design effectiveness .................................... 128
Summary – Design effectiveness .................................................................. 134

7 DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION AND FACILITATION ..................................... 137
Overview .................................................................................................... 137
7.1 Intentional design compared with outcomes – Overall enactment .............. 137
7.2 Intentional design compared with outcomes – Enacting the inputs ............ 142
7.3 Reflective work – Learning from the experience ...................................... 144
7.4 Facilitating inquiry into practice .............................................................. 152
Summary .................................................................................................... 153

8 IN-ACTION TESTING: EMERGING OUTCOMES .......................................... 155
Overview .................................................................................................... 155
8.1 Introductory remarks about emerging outcomes ....................................... 155
8.2 Stress .................................................................................................... 157
8.3 Confidence and power .......................................................................... 161
8.4 ‘Journey’ metaphor and integrative thinking experienced in the sessions .... 164
8.5 Necessity of the external agent ............................................................... 166
8.6 An instance of my meaning making ......................................................... 167
Summary – Questions framing the review of emerging outcomes ................. 176

9 DRAWING A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION...................................................... 178
Overview .................................................................................................... 178
9.1 Does the professional development activity work? .................................... 180
9.2 Developing my conceptual framework .................................................... 183
9.3 Learning to change ............................................................................... 185
9.4 Inquiry of practice, in-practice ............................................................... 191
9.5 Developing awareness of evaluation and the role of a practitioner’s values in
learning to change and conducting effective inquiry .................................. 196
9.6 Reflective research of practice for self as practitioner ............................... 200
9.7 Key outcomes of the inquiry – Contributing to Learning to Change .......... 205
9.8 Closing the circle – well, almost ............................................................ 208

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................ 209
GLOSSARY ..................................................................................................... 215
List of Tables

Table 4-1: Inquiry data sources....................................................................................... 60

List of Figures

Figure 1-1 Inquiry matrix............................................................................................... 2
Figure 2-1 Contributors to concept of Reflective Research of Practice......................... 23
Figure 4-1 Mind Map for Research June-July 2000, revised 2002................................. 64
Figure 2 Johari Window................................................................................................ 218
Figure 3 Individual Perspectives in an Interpersonal Interaction................................. 218
Contributing to Learning to Change

List of Abbreviations

ABE  Adult Basic Education
BATNA  Best alternative to a negotiated agreement
C.A.F.E.  Certificate of Attainment for Adult Foundation Education
CNC  Clinical Nurse Consultant
CNCAG  Clinical Nurse Consultants’ Advisory Group = CNC Forum
CNHS  Community Nursing Health Services
DEETYA  Federal Government Department of Employment, Education Training and Youth Affairs
DN  Diary notes (self researcher-facilitator)
E  Extravert preference in MBTI (see details in Glossary)
EB  Boardwork from brainstorming of ABE group session
EDOR  Education group Design Observation Records
EEM  Education group email communications
EGDIAL  Education Group session Dialogue notes
EGRP  Education Group session transcript
EINT  Education group Interview transcripts
ENFP  Extravert/Intuitive/Feeling/Perceiving combination
ENTJ  Extravert/Intuitive/Thinking/Judging combination
EP1-5  Participants 1-5 of the ABE group
EPR  End-of-session Reflections of ABE group participants
EPSP  Education group session preparation notes
ESD  Education group session document
ESFP  Extravert/Sensing/Feeling/Perceiving combination
ESFJ  Extravert/Sensing/Feeling/Judging combination
ESOL  English for Speakers of Other Languages
F  Feeling function in MBTI (see details in Glossary)
GLR  General Life Reflections (self)
HDOR  Health group Design Observation Records
HB  Boardwork from brainstorming of CNHS group session
HP1-5  Participants 1-5 of the CNHS group
HPR  End-of-session Reflections of CNHS group participants
HSD  Health group session document
HPSP  Health group session preparation notes
I  Introvert preference in MBTI (see details in Glossary)
INFJ  Introvert/Intuitive/Feeling/Judging combination
INTJ  Introvert/Intuitive/Thinking/Judging combination
ISFP  Introvert/Sensing/Feeling/Perceiving combination
Contributing to Learning to Change

J Judging focus for externalised activity dimension in MBTI (see details in Glossary)

LOC Locus of Control (see details in Glossary)

MBTI Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (see details in Glossary)

N Intuitive function in MBTI (see details in Glossary)

N/S Intuitive/Sensing dimension in MBTI (see details in Glossary)

NUD.IST Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory-building software

NUM Nurse Unit Manager

P Perceiving focus for externalised activity dimension in MBTI (see details in Glossary)

PN Pencil notes (self researcher-facilitator)

RN Reading Notes (self)

ROS Reflections and observations of supervision interactions (self researcher)

S Sensing function in MBTI (see details in Glossary)

S.A.A.F.E. Statement of Attainment for Adult Foundation Education

T Thinking function in MBTI (see details in Glossary)

TAFE Technical and Further Education

TDW Thesis Draft Writing notes (self)

T/F Thinking/Feeling dimension in MBTI (see details in Glossary)

TOA Tolerance of Ambiguity (see details in Glossary)

WELL Workplace English Language & Literacy

X-Y Values Tool to measure values in human relationships at work (see Glossary for detail)
Abstract

Learning to change is difficult, complex, and takes time. This raises two questions for me: Why is this so? How can such learning to change be facilitated? This study explores the issues involved in learning to change. It undertakes the study from a viewpoint which values having an explanatory conceptual understanding (theory) that will inform action (practice), both for learners seeking to engage with change for their own practice, and for a facilitator of such learning with others.

My first focus was on testing the efficacy of a professional development activity. The design for the activity was based on my conception of reflective research of practice, developed from the work of Kenneth Kressel, and what would be involved in developing such an approach to learning about practice, in-practice. My testing involved two processes: (1) exploring whether the professional development activity, when used with two different groups of professionals, encouraged them to engage in such an approach in their own practice; (2) engaging with my own practitioner experience and comparing my theorising about the experience with that reported in the literature.

Consequently, I have at least two stories to tell. And I share these stories on the basis of one of my findings: sharing reflective stories prompts reciprocal sharing, and shared reflective thinking may challenge perspectives and perceptions, triggering additional learning. Practitioners, by engaging with these stories and using their own active compare-and-contrast, and their own values, may be stimulated to undertake further thinking about their own practice, and its rationale. From such a process may come ideas for change which they are prepared to try in-practice; or a deeper, firmer understanding of why they value their own approach over this other. Either result tends to revitalise intentional action in-practice.
Contributing to Learning to Change

The first story concerns the outcome of conducting the professional development activity design with two groups of professionals: the outcomes of the activity, while not reaching my intended target, indicate the design’s merit.

The second story concerns the change wrought in myself by the conduct of the inquiry: the first focus on testing the efficacy of a professional development activity shifted to the progressive deepening of my understanding of the theories and practice of

- learning to change, for an adult learner
- inquiry, especially inquiry into practice issues, in-practice
- evaluation, by beginning to enunciate how, and on what basis I was evaluating, and
- the nature of the relationship between learning, inquiry, and evaluation that constitutes much of intentional action in-practice: its intricate interactivity.

In developing my understanding of theory and practice, I draw on the work of scholar-practitioners who have a longstanding engagement with the field, including Argyris, Bateson, Heron, Mezirow and Schön. I conclude that reflective research of practice, or self-study of practice for improvement of practice, can be enhanced. Tools that enhance it include: (1) developing self-awareness; (2) developing reflective work to move progressively into the subtle and the contextual elements of practice; and where possible (3) engaging in this enterprise with a group of peers in a collaborative or cooperative context (4) where participants are focused on taking intentional action developed from inquiry into the thinking-action complex of in-practice activities.

---μλμ---


Acknowledgements

The task of undertaking a research thesis study is, despite the singular award, an endeavour dependent on the contributions, good offices and support of many.

In the case of this study my indebtedness to the many includes the following in particular:

- the participants in the groups where the professional development activity was implemented, and their supporting organisations, for making the whole process possible
- staff and students of the University of Wollongong, for supervisory support with the technicalities of thesis studies and reporting
- my family, for bearing with my absences when they might have preferred my presence and for support and encouragement at many levels
- the congregation of Christ Church, Kiama, for prayers and other tangible interest and engagement that encouraged and spurred the endeavour
- professional colleagues, for their ongoing interest and sharing of their professional concerns that continue to inform my practical focus
- peer students at a number of institutions, for sharing and being with me themselves in some of the uncertainties of the journey
- published scholars in a number of spheres, whose contribution may not get direct acknowledgement here, but whose work has been part of the process of cross-evaluation to settle in my mind an understanding of the boundaries of what I have been working with.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Context – Contributing to Learning to Change

As the amount and rate of change continue to grow in current society, learning to change is becoming a more significant generic capacity for individuals and cooperative and collaborative groups. While some change occurs naturally as we grow and develop as individuals, learning is part of the process of having flexibility in how we interact with our environment – physically, socially and relationally – to respond to difference and change in that environment. As we develop and mature, one of the maturation processes involves becoming aware of what has been learned, what is learnable, and what is no longer useful knowledge. And when adults recognise that something learned, a habit formed, a routine response, is no longer useful, is indeed dangerous, they find they also need to learn how to change, and how to make a change in what has been learned in the past. The saying ‘old habits die hard’ is an indicative description of the complexity of this kind of change and what is likely to be involved in such change. This study seeks to explore what is involved in learning to change, and what is involved in facilitating such learning.

1.2 Focusing – Inquiry questions and inquiry processes

Within the bigger picture noted above, my study focuses on a narrower element. The specific change which I explore is purposeful improvement in a professional practice context: what is involved in making such a change, and how can such a change be facilitated?

My particular, personal frame is one where I value having an explanatory conceptual understanding of the issues involved (theory) which informs my action (practice). I express this through a matrix approach in this investigation. Firstly, I endeavour to test whether ideas for contributing to learning to change for others, especially by a particular
design of a facilitated professional development activity, does bring the change anticipated or designed. Secondly, I engage with issues associated with purposeful improvement as they arise in my own practice. My testing involves two processes: (1) exploring whether the professional development activity, when used, works: does it work for me?; does it work for others?; (2) engaging with practitioner experience and theorising to see if that instructs my understanding of what is happening, for me and for others, as we engage with this kind of change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Their individual and corporate particularities</td>
<td>My practice (facilitation, inquiry and facilitation of inquiry): My practice (facilitation, inquiry and facilitation of inquiry):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the professional development activity work for others?</td>
<td>What does the literature say that helps me improve my practice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My practice (facilitation, inquiry and facilitation of inquiry): Does the professional development activity work for me?</td>
<td>My practice (facilitation, inquiry and facilitation of inquiry): What does the literature say that helps me improve my practice?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**^Sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testing Process</th>
<th>In-Action Testing</th>
<th>Purposeful Reflection Testing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>The more particular – how does this particular design work out in my case, in others’ cases</td>
<td>Interaction with the Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>The more general; the accumulated theories and practices of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1-1 Inquiry matrix**

At the practice level the questions that develop are:

- What is the design of the professional development activity?
- What is the rationale informing this particular design?
- Can I implement the design, and facilitate the professional development activity amongst a group of professional practitioners?
- Does the professional development activity work?:
  - Does it result in the intended outcomes -
    - for other practitioners, in their practice/s?
    - for me, in my practice/s?

At the practice level of “Does it work?”, the argument is based on what Argyris calls ‘design causality’, where the logic is an ‘if … then …’ argument (Argyris, 1993, pp.2-
Contribution to Learning to Change

3) ‘If the professional development activity design includes preparatory work on self-awareness, and uses resources to encourage structured reflection and if it focuses action learning processes on current practice concerns then it will result in participants being able to engage in the kind of inquiry that leads to improved practice’. The in-action testing involves the move-testing experiment of Schön’s reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983; 1987, p.70): the practitioner tries the intentional action developed from reflective work on the presenting problem and observes and reflects on the outcome/s. The process of testing the argument is one of evaluation. Evaluation is implied in the concept that anything, something, and in this case, professional practice, can be ‘improved’: before can be compared with after, and a target of improvement, however defined by the practitioner, can be set. One such evaluation is at the level of comparison of action effectiveness: comparison of intent and outcome. Such are the elements of methodology, at the practice level.

At the conceptual level the questions that develop are:

- What is the nature of the learning needed to improve one’s own practice?
- What is the nature of the inquiry needed to improve practice?
- What is the nature of the evaluation needed to inform a decision to act, in-practice?

At the conceptual level of “What is the nature of …?”, I am involved in building meaning, and understanding, both of what I do, my own practice, and how I am thinking about it, and what is happening when the professional development activities are conducted with others. The building of my conceptual framework, and its rebuilding, in response to the findings of the in-action testing, is conducted in the company of the thinking of other practitioners, mostly as conveyed in the literature.

Part of the self-inquiry involves indicating my understanding of my practice before trying to undertake this endeavour. Documenting that involves a certain level of self-awareness, and also requires working at making what is implicit, or tacit, more explicit – both to enunciate it, then to evaluate it. Part of the in-action testing is finding out if the design works for me. If it does, then I can say: it works for me; I use it; I have found such-and-such about it. I am not asking another to do what I am not prepared to,
Contributing to Learning to Change

or cannot, do myself. This is the congruence issue for me in my practice, the theory-in-use capacity to model the process. It is the learning-by-doing aspect. When I do it, I find that it is not necessarily as simple and as straightforward as the literature would appear to imply. Also, the process is then reflexive: my level of self-awareness about my practice has been refined over the course of this investigation.

**Terminology:**

I am using the term ‘reflexive’ to convey the relationship where the subject conducting the activity is also to some extent the object of the activity – thinkers exploring their thinking.

I use the term ‘reflective’ to refer to the careful thinking which has the characteristics identified by Dewey in *How we think* (Dewey, 1933).

Other authors use ‘reflexive’ to speak of an action which is a reflex action – virtually automatic, without any evidence of any space for conscious thought. When that is the meaning I want to convey I will use the term ‘reactive’, and I distinguish that from ‘responsive’ where the action responds to the situation or actions of others, but intentionally: that is, where some thought, or rationale, is informing the action.

1.3 Developing professional practice

As a professional I have an interest which can be described as “How do I improve my practice?” (Whitehead, 1997-present).

My career, based in New South Wales, Australia, has undergone significant change. The first stages were formal training for (1963-1967) and becoming a teacher of secondary school science (1966, 1968-1973). That was followed by a movement to the management, development and administration of a public library service (1974-5, 1976-1992), and greater involvement in organisation-wide personnel policy and practice, developing into strategic planning for a local government agency dealing with demographic growth and change in an outer metropolitan area (1975-6, 1984-1992 and 1992-1999). In the course of those transitions, I found myself involved time and again with what was for me, non-routine: moving into areas where prior training provided no particular content and discipline expertise. In the absence of content expertise, I developed a reliance on process: the process of inquiry.
1.3.1 Professional practice

My understanding of professional practice includes the appreciation that aspects of professional practice are complex and messy (Schön, 1995). One of its characteristics is that a major instrument of the practice is the professional, a person. Further, professionals work primarily with what knowledge they have and can mobilise, or what knowledge they can develop as they explore a problem. One of the significant tools of their practice is therefore their technique in inquiry. In addition, their activity with problem solving, using their own mobilisable resources of knowledge, and process of inquiry, is with other people and their presenting problems. Consequently, professional practice operates at the interpersonal interface, sometimes with intrapersonal issues, sometimes with interpersonal issues on a continuum from one-to-one to the socio-political dimension. A significant proportion of such a practice can therefore be spent in situations where the practitioner is operating as a sole practitioner, with a client or clients, and dealing with sensitive and confidential matters. Procedures designed to improve such a practice need to address one, or other, or all of these factors.

1.3.2 Professional development

By the beginning of the 1990s the basic work of a number of writers and theorists whose work is informing the field had been laid down (Baskett & Marsick, 1992). These writers include Chris Argyris, David Boud et al., Stephen Brookfield, Wilfred Carr and Stephen Kemmis, John Heron, Jack Mezirow, Donald Schön. Those at the edge of innovation in professional development are either trying to work with the ideas of these writers, to extend their practical application, or they are professional development practitioners who are working with their clients and their experience and exploring innovative designs, which, on post-operational analytical review, can be seen to have features demonstrating the application of these ideas.

Broadly speaking, professional development is concerned with a number of current issues. One is: how to keep up with the ongoing burgeoning of knowledge developed externally to the practising professional. Another is: how to deal with the other elements of a professional’s milieu, as noted above: the personal, the interpersonal, the social, the organisational, and the political. Baskett, Marsick and Cervero (1992), in
Contributing to Learning to Change

providing a converging overview to the field, scoped the presenting professional development issues as tending to lie between poles on a number of dimensions:

- The relational context of learning – is it individual or collective?
- The process of problem solving – is it rational or intuitive?
- The nature of learning – is it cognitive or emotional?
- The nature of the presenting problem – is it routine or non-routine?
- The structural context of learning including questions of efficiency and effectiveness – is it formal or informal?
- The nature of professional knowledge – is it scientific or constructed?¹ (Baskett, Marsick, & Cervero, 1992, pp.109-110)

The concept of ‘professional development’, by including ‘development’, implies change. Experience shows that no matter how much material can be gathered up into an accepted body of knowledge for a professional field, and compiled into an undergraduate and post-graduate curriculum, and covered by required continuing professional education, ‘more can be done’. Development implies stages of change and perhaps even transitions. Steady incremental change, including what is called the steep learning curve, is covered by the idea of development. Periods of ‘incubation’ and then sudden transformations are recognised as another form of development. The new graduate becomes an ‘intern’. The generalist makes the transition to specialist – by study and examination by peers, or promotion to partnership with a particular ‘holding brief’.

Within the ‘industries’ of pre-professional training, professional formation, and professional development, increasing pressure for greater effectiveness will mean that learning design claims of effectiveness will come under greater scrutiny.

¹ This final ‘polar’ comparison is one where I find I disagree with Baskett, Marsick and Cervero. In my view ‘scientific’ is also a ‘construct’ – a set of humanly-designed, propositional premises of how to frame and explore knowledge. While some from the positivist’s camp may claim the scientific’s greater match with tangible reality, compared with the more openly relativistic of the constructivist camp, within the physical sciences, at least, something like Einstein’s theory of relativity and Heisenberg’s principle of uncertainty suggests that this is a wilfully simplified view of reality. I think I know what Baskett et al. are getting at, and it is, in part, the supposed distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, but the terminology is not helpful.
1.3.3 Practice context

Within the broad field of professional development, my focus is on professional development in a practice context, thus expressing my preference for some practical outcome from the activity of inquiry. The practice context is also where professionals, as adults, are interested in developing their competence, by engaging in learning. For something to be knowledge for them, something which can be mobilised, to make their professional activity more effective, it needs to be able to be applied by them, in their practice, while recognising the exigencies of practice – for example: ‘clinical noise’ (Kressel, 1997). A focus on the practice context also responds to the need to acknowledge that practice knowledge is important, and worthy of working at, even if it is difficult to control, to manage, in a traditional ‘research’ frame (Argyris, 1993; Baskett & Marsick, 1992; Schön, 1983). Indeed, a focus on the practice context may ask us to revisit the potentials and practice of research, to enable us to select what is useful, and particularly useful for the practice context and its particularities for the individual in the context, and to leave to others, and other contexts, those approaches to research which are not designed to be practically useful.

1.4 Recent focusing of my interest

My particular interest in professional development, in the practice context, was focused recently by my engagement in postgraduate studies in dispute resolution (1996-1998). Those studies culminated in my construction of the idea of ‘reflective research of practice’ (Allen, 1998) – developed from both my experience of trying to learn (to change and to be more effective in that field) and the stimulus of a significant practitioner’s documented findings on inquiring in that field (Kressel, 1997) – and involved proposals for encouraging and developing its application, in-practice.

The outcome of my first intensive study of reflective research of practice (as applied in the study of third party intervention) was as follows:

The study posed two questions:
1. What is reflective research of practice? What is there about it which makes it different? Is it a different paradigm? What is there about it which makes it distinctive?
2. What is it about reflective research of practice that means it has a particular contribution to make to the activity of third party intervention in dispute resolution?

To which the answers may now be seen to be:

1. The reflective research of practice is the process of inquiring into the thinking of practitioners that informs their action in the practice. It is essentially the natural form of inquiry common to all research endeavours. Its focus is different.
   - It is the focus on the thinking of the actor in the intervention which is distinctively different. The thinking is a significant component of the data which needs to be gathered. Case study method tools are recommended for this task.
   - It is the thinking and models, or cognitive schema, or routine, patterned behaviour, which needs to be explored. The relationship between thinking and action needs to be discerned. Once that is found there is a possibility of rethinking, remodelling the thinking, to generate different models or cognitive schema of what is going on, what can be done to deliver change, which provides other options for action. It is the self-reflective team, actors in the event, which operates to undertake this inquiry.
   - The options developed can then be tested for relative effectiveness. The testing can be either by further thinking, or by direct experiment. This is then done by the members of the team in an agent-experient self-reflective mode - a form of action research.

2. The contribution this makes to the activity of the third party intervention in dispute resolution is its capacity to be an aid to the task of improving the practice of the practitioner, by raising awareness of the theory-in-use and subjecting that to open testing in the company of other practitioners, and, by that process of articulation, providing tools for the education of other practitioners and, in some circumstances, potentially leading to the formulation of generalisable knowledge. A further contribution is: that it does this investigation in a way that is essentially congruent to the tasks involved in third party intervention in dispute resolution: applying a recognisable process, applying the same range of skills, undertaking the same investigative tasks, including challenging perceptive frames. (Allen, 1998)

The proposals for encouraging and developing its application, in-practice, included (1) working on self-awareness; (2) working with structured reflection protocols; and, (3) if operating in a group context, using those elements as preparatory components for professional development activity focusing on (4) an action learning based inquiry of current practice concerns.
In the current inquiry, the subject of this thesis, I seek to take these ideas further.

1.4.1 Extending the exploration

As foreshadowed in my 1998 report, I expected the application of my concept of practice inquiry to be able to be extended to additional professions. In my view, the basic elements of reflective research of practice are generic, and when appropriate, the particulars of a specific professional practice need to be taken into account, as particularities within the process of practice inquiry. Consequently, part of my investigation involves reporting on how I have progressed the testing of these ideas, in-practice, by working with two groups, each with five other professionals, in practices other than mediation. These instances of applying the professional development activity, firstly to a group of adult educators, and secondly to a group of nurse consultants, can be considered to constitute two illustrative cases, able to give some indication of the effectiveness of the design. The third illustrative case study is the self-study.

The following is a brief overview of the particulars of these two illustrative group cases:

1.4.1.1 Participants

The professional development activity was conducted with two groups of professionals. The first group was of five women who were experienced Adult Basic Education teachers (ABE Group) in a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) College in an outer metropolitan area. The second group was of five women who were experienced nurses involved in providing clinical nurse consultant (CNC) or health care management advice services, in a community nursing health service framework (CNHS group) also in an outer metropolitan area.

1.4.1.2 Location

The professional development activity was conducted in facilities associated with their places of work. In the case of the ABE group, the location of the group sessions was in rooms of the TAFE college – the ABE library, the ABE computer resource room, and the ABE staff room, while interviews were held in the ABE computer resource room, or staff offices, or at home for one
participant. In the case of the CNHS group, the first without-prejudice session was held at the area health service offices while the remaining sessions were held at a facility (the coordinator’s service base) associated with a domiciliary nursing service.

1.4.1.3 Logistics and timing

The professional development engagement was negotiated with both groups for approximately 40 hours for each group, conducted in a number of separate sessions over a period of time, dependent on operating constraints for the groups. In the case of the ABE group, the sessions commenced in October 1999 and continued till April 2000 with two more special purpose discussions held in June and August 2000, and with interviews running in April, July and October 2000. In the case of the CNHS group, the sessions commenced in June 2000 and continued to December 2000. No interviews were conducted with the CNHS participants.

1.4.1.4 Framing

The professional development activity aim was framed as ‘to develop an action learning peer support group of professionals to investigate ways of improving their own professional practice’. It was also framed as a university research project, and conducted with the permission of the organisation with which the participants were associated. In the explanatory, introductory documents, prepared for the University’s Ethics Committee and shared with the organisational authorities and the participants, the goal was expressed as

To help a small group of professionals (TAFE teachers of Adult Basic Education; Clinical Nurse Consultants with the Area Health Service), with different disciplinary backgrounds, within an organisation, to form as a peer support team to make a systematic study of their ways of dealing with interpersonal interactions where current outcomes do not entirely meet their expectations, and then to try to design changes of approach to try in similar situations and to evaluate the results of the trial.

Its conduct was for self-selecting volunteers, and involved a preliminary, without-prejudice, briefing session, and stages when continuing the process was open to renegotiation, and individual participation was re-affirmed. Entry to the organisations and access to the two groups was achieved by the support of one
of the participants of each group and with whom I had a relationship of professional sharing on and off over a long period prior to the development of the design.

The process of the professional development activity involved group discussions based around negotiated practice needs. Some of the discussion was directed around the materials I brought to the discussion for the development of self- and other-awareness (see Chapter 3 for details). Some of the discussion was of the practice concerns of the group. Between sessions the participants fulfilled their current in-practice obligations, and some of these involved activities which worked with the material raised or developed in the group discussions.

1.4.1.5 Inquiry techniques used

The process of data collection associated with the inquiry into the effectiveness of the professional development activity involved:

- the conduct of a Benchmark questionnaire and a Progress questionnaire
- the generation of facilitation design notes pre-session
- the generation of observer records of the session, post-session
- the generation of in-session discussion notes (records of whiteboard collections of issues brainstorming)
- the generation of individual participant end-of-session reflections
- the generation of observer’s contemporaneous notes of group discussion interchanges (for three sessions with the ABE group)
- the collection of audiotape records of interviews (for the ABE group) which were transcribed, and an audiotape record of the final ABE group discussion (also transcribed). The three interview sessions held with the ABE participants were focused on their individual action learning activities: what the activity involved, and what were their objectives in that activity, and how they would evaluate their activity (first interview) and how they were progressing with the activity (second and third interviews).
Data processing involved the comparison of the different sources, undertaking thematic analyses appropriate to the evaluation being conducted and building a coherent story to convey my understanding of the experience. Four different sources contributed to the identification of the operative themes:

- the participant’s practice objectives generated themes specific to the groups
- the professional development activity design suggested various dimensions of change as themes of more general individual and group responses to the design
- the comparison of intent against action, used to measure effectiveness of implementation, suggested additional themes
- the conduct of the activity and the processing of the data gathered exposed additional themes as I sought to identify any other practice-relevant outcomes and as I worked at my own meaning making of the whole experience

1.4.1.6 Third illustrative case study – Self-study

The third illustrative case study is the self-study: of my learn-by-doing, and initially in the same terms, at the same times, locations and contexts as the professional development activity design.

The process of data collection associated with the self-study included:

- the material for the inquiry into the effectiveness of the professional development activity and my analytical and structured reflective notes associated with the activity
- my reflective notes associated with contemporaneous life activities which included reading and working with the relevant literature, the writing involved in the development of a thesis, and other formal studies and professional working situations that occurred over the period of the conduct of the professional development activity and the preparation of what is reported here.
1.4.2  *A second cycle*

In drawing the inquiry to a tentative close I report the outcomes of continuing to test my ideas and understanding against the findings of others working in a similar field, as reported in the literature. In this second stage of the inquiry, the exploration of the literature is informed by the outcomes of the experience of testing the professional development activity in-practice. In the longer term I am interested in determining whether my ideas about a more practice-oriented professional development process prove to be effective, and if so, in due course, to consider to what extent these ideas might challenge other mechanisms of professional development, in terms of relative effectiveness.

1.5  *My argument in overview*

As I look back on how this investigation has developed, I recognise that I have been grappling with Learning/Inquiry/Evaluation, the interactive complex which is involved in preparing for thoughtful action to bring intentional change to people as individuals and in interaction with others.

*Learning:* To make a change in practice, to improve practice, there needs to be learning about practice, in particular an increased awareness about the nature of one’s own practice. What is the nature of the learning required to improve one’s own practice? I argue that part of the answer is: it needs to be ‘actionable knowledge’ in Argyris’ terms, and ‘learned’ in Argyris’ terms – where the actor is able to detect and correct the error (Argyris, 1993, p.3). To correct error involves being able to take a different action, or to change the thinking related to the action, or sometimes to change both: the thinking and the action.

*Inquiry:* To learn about practice, inquiry about practice has to be conducted. For the individual’s practice, it is inquiry about the specific individual’s actual practice. The individual’s practice has some elements in common with all other practices, but some elements are idiosyncratic to the individual. To improve this practice it is up to individuals to identify their own learning needs. I argue that this involves self-inquiry. An aspect of self-inquiry involves self-awareness. What is the nature of the self-
inquiry needed to improve practice? I argue that part of the answer is: it needs firstly to be appropriate to inquiry into practice. Further, being able to conduct that inquiry in a cooperative or a collaborative context is needed to help manage both the complexity inherent in the practice context and the potential for bias of that is considered to arise in self-inquiry (Kressel, 1997, p.146-7).

**Evaluation:** To make any change involves:

- investigation to suggest what needs to be changed and how to change it;
- then a decision to act, acting as informed by the investigation;
- then reviewing the learning from the results of the investigation, the acting, and ongoing investigation of the results of the action, to know such change in all its fullness.

The basis of such a decision to act needs to be as sound as possible. How we evaluate soundness to inform such a decision is then part of the process. What form does this evaluation take? Is that evaluation itself soundly based? A first step in identifying the form of the evaluation, to be able to check on how soundly based it is, involves becoming self-aware about one’s active values – the values one acts upon.

The activities involved are operating at a second-order, meta-level, where the whole process may be considered to be learning about learning, inquiring into inquiry in order to learn, evaluating an evaluative practice of inquiry for learning to act. In that understanding, the actors are evaluators who are reflecting on their mode of inquiry. The actors are directly *involved* and therefore *controlling* the inquiry and are *committed* to achieving an improvement in their practice. The change, of action, or of thinking, or of the thinking-action complex, will be a result of *applying* the actionable knowledge derived from the evaluative review of experience. For thoughtful action to bring intentional change learning, inquiry and evaluation are seen to be inextricably interrelated.
1.6 Presentation issues

In reporting how I conducted my in-action testing (Chapter 4), I elaborate on the limitations of the methods I have chosen in order to advance this inquiry. Within these methods I have struggled with a number of conventions. The first is voice in the genre of thesis writing. One of the conventions is that voice be assertoric (Heron, 1992, p.10). I have found that, in writing the report of this inquiry, such a convention runs contrary to the nature of the higher/deeper/extended levels of reflective judgement (King & Kitchener, 1994, pp.7, 13-17) – which is premised on having an open epistemology. It also runs contrary to one of the aims of practitioner self-study, where ‘we are not seeking to confirm and settle’ (LaBoskey, 2004, pp.818, 827, 851) but to stir and unsettle. The second convention is tense: the tense of thesis writing is generally past tense – a report of things done. My experience of working with the tense as I draft and redraft makes clear to me that in drafting, especially of the conceptual material, I am operating on a work-in-progress. Not only do I need to have an open epistemology to accommodate reflective judgement, I often naturally express myself in the present continuous tense – indicating the ongoing activity of ‘understanding’.

The third convention where my representation may differ from the ‘expected’ is in how I deal with ‘the literature’. This inquiry starts at a point where one round of literature work has been done and has built a certain understanding of what might be involved in reflective research of practice, and to what extent a professional development design might contribute to such reflective research of practice (Allen, 1998). As I have worked with the literature, and my own understanding, to integrate both in a mobilisable way, it has become progressively more difficult to represent a specific part of the literature in a way which might be expected for this level of study. Designating a particular page, or a single quote, would be to misrepresent what I have been attending to, and how.

Some of my awareness of the field, and its contribution to the professional development activity design, is conveyed as I consider the major source of my idea for reflective research of practice (Chapter 2), and as I enunciate the design and its rationale (Chapter 3) and how I engaged with the conduct of its testing, both with the peer experience documented in the literature (Chapter 3), and in-action (Chapter 4). Some of my
awareness of the field is mobilised as I consider the implications of testing the design in-action as I implemented the design with two groups of professionals (Chapters 5-8). The findings from the enactment of the professional development activity, namely that the change which develops is subtle, and difficult to know and evaluate, required me to turn again to the literature to see what it could now contribute to the development of my conceptual framework. As I draw the report to a tentative conclusion (Chapter 9) I indicate the results of engaging with that second round of interactions with the literature. The recurrence of the same literature in different contexts is somewhat reminiscent of the impact of the thematic analysis of data. The theme is given preference over source, or chronology, and together with the processes of selection and progressive convergence, can sometimes hide the extent to which I have been attending to the detail of the literature inputs.

The literature becomes a virtual community of peer practitioners, reporting both their practice findings and their thinking about it. The second turn to the literature is part of the iterative and interactive process of action and reflection in any ongoing inquiry of substantive practice concerns. The second iteration in the investigation of my thinking, and its effectiveness in action, has led me to a more nuanced understanding of the interaction of learning, inquiry and evaluation.

My presentation is a matter of demonstrating, how, in this instance, I have chosen to punctuate my experience: what I decide is the start, and the finish. Punctuation of experience is arbitrary, and is related to what we understand is change (Bateson, 1964 & 1971, pp.287-301). Indeed, one of the processes of changing perception, to allow another way of discerning experience, is to change the punctuation of experience. It is part of what is decided is context, and relevant, over against what is incidental, irrelevant. Punctuating experience and options in punctuating experience are learned by and from experience. If this report challenges traditional forms, it may well be a result of seeking to deal with change, and the report itself may need to be reflexive at this point – it may need to be different, to make a change, and thus demonstrate what it is endeavouring to argue.

I am writing about an action research at two levels: (1) the research of my action as it impacts on others – the professional development activity; (2) the research of my own
learning to change by engaging in mindful and purposive actions. These activities are concurrent and interwoven, and on a small scale are iterative, generating what others call a ‘hermeneutic spiral’ (Gummesson, 1991, p.62). In action research, the concept of ‘cycle’ represents another construct of punctuation, a matter of patterning experience (Bateson, 1964 & 1971, pp.299-301). In reflective inquiry, Heron suggests that one of the aspects of such cycling should include the element of cycling between convergence and divergence (Heron, 1985, 1996c). The task of writing about the two different but interactive cycles is one of trying to make that clear and, to some extent, to separate them. But such separation, if carried too far, can be misleading. This thesis represents my best attempt at balancing these multiple expectations at this stage of my developing understanding.

""
Overview

Kenneth Kressel’s concept of ‘reflective research’ has both challenged my understanding of the inquiry process appropriate for inquiry into human activity (Kressel, 1997) and given me ideas for developing a professional development activity which responds to the implications of such a changed understanding. In this chapter I examine how Kressel’s concept informs the thesis explored in this report and where such a study is placed in its field. From my work with Kressel’s concept, and the writings of other practitioners in a number of different fields, I argue that certain specific tools are needed to assist professionals to improve their practice by improving their processes of inquiry, and by learning to make reasonable changes based on the results of valid and effective inquiry into their practice. In keeping with the reflective research mode, as enunciated by Kressel, and supplemented by my study of the fields, I anticipated testing this hypothesis in practice, both by introducing specific tools to other professionals in a professional development context and evaluating the outcomes, and by undertaking this exploration by learning-by-doing, myself.

2.1 Reflective research in context

Kressel’s concept of reflective research can be seen to be the culmination of a lifetime of research and professional practice, and in particular with the study of the conditions leading to disputes, and the strategies involved in resolving them (Kressel, 1972, 1994; Kressel, Butler-DeFreitas, Forlenza, & Wilcox, 1989; Kressel, Frontera, Butler-DeFreitas, & Fish, 1994; Kressel & Pruitt, 1985a, 1985b; Kressel & Pruitt, 1989).

In more recent years, Kressel reported finding himself, while engaged in practice, conducting effective research, which, in retrospect, appeared to be in conflict with his
field of operations, described as within the ‘traditional dominant empiricist model’, where he claimed ‘we still lack clear models by which to conduct empirical studies of mediation that practitioners would find relevant’ (Kressel, 1997, p.144). Arising from that experience, he engaged in a review of what was going on in the events associated with what he and his colleagues did, as practitioners, while trying to improve their practice. The reconsiderations related to: what is the kind of research which is best suited to exploring practice and practice concerns?; what is the knowledge sought and claimed in such an approach?; and what is going on in model building?

These kinds of questions led him to question some of the emphases of the dominant empiricist model when it is used to investigate issues of practice. In his analysis he then touched on aspects of the methods and methodology of other stances: what are called the interpretive and the critical perspectives (as distinct from the ‘pure’, objective, empirical-analytic with its hypothetico-deductive elements and its experimental testing). He did not, however, explore the wider debate on research methodology in any depth in this article. From the wider debate I would argue as follows²:

- There are multiple methods of conducting inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba, 1990; Patton, 2002; Reason & Bradbury, 2001).
- While there might be multiple methods, unless an inquirer is aware of the important link between inquiry method and the kind of knowledge being sought and the phenomenon being studied and the intrinsic values associated with the phenomenon being investigated, and a link which needs to be honoured in the choice of a method to undertake an investigation, then the inquiry undertaken may be at risk of inherent, internal invalidity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997; Schön, 1991; Toulmin, 1996).

² I would also note that this articulation of the nature of inquiry, and the following articulation of the nature of learning to change, is more an outcome of my inquiry in this instance than what I could have stated going into the inquiry (see Chapter 9). I certainly was working with inklings of these articulations, but not in the integrated forms provided here. Had I gone into my inquiry with these integrated articulations, certain aspects of my design would need to be different in order to be congruent.
For inquiry for practice, to deliver actionable knowledge while still remaining engaged in practice, an effective and practical inquiry process (something like action research) is needed (Argyris, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Toulmin, 1996).

For inquiry into the elements of practice that involve interpersonal interactions, the inquiry needs persons to do the study, as well as recognising that it is persons who are being studied (Heron & Reason, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2001b).

For inquiry of persons by persons, managed reflexivity will be a significant component (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Furthermore, developing a process that harnesses collaborative work and cooperative effort effectively (authentic, uncoerced, consensus exploration) will both assist manage bias and complexity, and be respectful of the personhood of the participants, in their respective roles (Heron, 1992; Heron & Reason, 1997; Ravetz, 1987; Schön, 1991).

The area of Kressel’s inquiry endeavours, mediation of disputes, included elements of the interpersonal. Patterns of behaviour – of actions and thinking – exist in interpersonal interactions which have elements of routinised systemic interactions, with the origins and reinforcement of unproductive and escalating cycles in an individual’s personal history, sometimes including early childhood experience. To deal effectively with routinised reactions, a person needs to be able to make a significant change. To help another deal effectively with routinised reactions, a mediator, or a learning facilitator, is involved with an area of learning that includes aspects of metacognition, thinking about thinking (Power, 1992) and learning to learn (Argyris, 1993; Bateson, 1972): being and helping others be aware of processes as well as content.

To work on change of interpersonal behaviour takes my exploration into the fields of learning associated with building actionable knowledge, by an adult, in the company of other adults, peers, and while endeavouring to work with a phenomenon with systemic attributes, by engaging in an examination of assumptions and inferences in thinking related to the exchanges that constitute the relationship. Here, the longitudinal work of five scholar-practitioners, Argyris, Schön, Mezirow, Bateson, and Heron, have had a key role in helping me think through what is involved in learning to change, especially
when the change required touches on previously learned responses. My engagement with the work of these practitioners brings me to the point where I express my understanding of learning to change, a form of learning to learn, in the following way:3

- Learning to change requires a learning that involves inquiry, and the kind of inquiry that needs to reach down to the level of assumptions and values of the inquirer (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Bateson, 1972), the level that Mezirow calls transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991).

- The kind of inquiry that reaches down into the assumptions and values of the professional practitioner includes reflection-on-action which (1) asks questions of a practitioner about what they are doing and how they are thinking about what they are doing and (2) may indicate a requirement for new thinking, new ways of framing what they were understanding the problem to be (Schön, 1983, 1995).

- In addition, changing assumptions and values, in the first instance, will need to be discontinuous or creative. Further, discontinuity is essentially risky, running against all the other indicators of the conservative: culture, and prior experience informed by the simpler arguments of instrumental learning and reasoning (Bateson, 1972). That being the case, it stands to reason that a great deal of energy would be required to overcome the emotional barriers involved in making the change necessary to demonstrate the effectiveness of such learning.

- Energy, for the implications of making a change in a thinking-action complex, can come from the experience of the comfortableness of the understanding that develops in the solution itself – the satisfying feeling coming from new meaning (Koestler, 1966). That is to say it becomes ‘grounded’ in feeling. While grounding in feeling comes after the insight, it is the insight, and the satisfaction with the understanding arising, that provide the motivating energy to take the next steps to make a change that represents a stabilised new view of the world, demonstrable in congruent practical action that is different from the previously ineffective action. Heron’s model of experiential learning has suggestions of how such an understanding might be mobilised in facilitating learning (Heron, 1999).

---

3 Likewise, this articulation of the learning required to intentionally change, is a result of this inquiry, and does not represent the understanding I took into the professional development activity designing process.
Such an understanding of learning to change brings me back to the point where, as a practitioner, inquiring, I need to focus on the nature of inquiry, and the development of quality in inquiry. Furthermore, if I am engaged in facilitating the work of other professionals in exploring the quality of their professional practice, the issue of the quality of inquiry, in the context of professional practice, needs to become a prime concern (Heron, 1996c).

As Baskett, Marsick and Cervero (1992, pp.109-115) note, contributors to a recent conference of continuing professional educators, exploring current trends in professional education, could be described as ‘struggling’ with a number of issues. They summarised some of the struggle as tension between at least six polarities (see details at Chapter 1.3.2) and concluded that improving professional education is a matter of ‘mind[ing] our business’, ‘work[ing] toward a more holistic approach to improving professional learning’ … ‘mov[ing] to where the learning occurs, creat[ing] systems for just-in-time learning’, ‘legitimiz[ing] and pay[ing] greater attention to practical knowledge’ and ‘addres[s] contextual influences on professional learning’. The focus, in this thesis, on learning more about the issues related to improving practice by an inquiry approach, is considered to be likely to contribute findings relevant to the field.

I have constructed the following diagram to indicate how some of these multiple inputs are gathered into a relatively coherent model, one which I call ‘reflective research of practice’.
Figure 2-1 Contributors to concept of Reflective Research of Practice
2.2 Areas of work required to develop reflective research

Kressel identified two fundamental concerns that need to be addressed by any research approach aimed at dealing realistically with practice issues. The first concern was with the need to maintain the focus of the investigative approach on practice imperatives: on what is going on; on how the mediator understands that; on what strategies work well, better than others. These are what Kressel called the ‘cardinal elements of the ‘in vivo’ mediation experience’ (Kressel, 1997, p.155). The second concern was with the need to maintain an appropriate recognition of the nature of practice and its investigation – what he called ‘the “embedded” context that conditions the understanding of the practitioner whose performance is the object of study’ (p.148). It was Kressel’s view that his concept of reflective research, which he then found documented in Schön’s work (Schön, 1983, 1987, 1991), addressed these concerns in the following ways: (1) the proposed, intimate involvement of the practitioner in the research enterprise should ensure that the focus remains on practice concerns, relevant to the practitioner; and (2) the use of the case study research approach should give proper honour to the context of the practice.

Kressel also identified a number of areas where, in his view, more work needed to be done to improve the processes of reflective research. He also made some tentative suggestions on what might be needed to develop the concept into a more effective working model. The first area where he highlighted a need for development was with the process of gathering the practitioner’s thinking. Here he proposed developing and streamlining protocols to capture the practitioner’s reflective work. Another area he identified was the need to develop the peer group to undertake significant aspects of the reflective investigation of practice. The question here is: what needs to be in place for a team to be able to engage in the reflective research enterprise?

One aspect of a team being able to engage in reflective research relates to the personal attributes available to the team⁴. Kressel identified ‘tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive flexibility and ego-strength’ as key attributes for the reflective enterprise (p.157). Here,

⁴ Schön comes to a similar conclusion, especially in regard to a practitioner who is operating in a participant-observer mode in a collaborative inquiry (Schön, 1991)
the question might be framed in the following terms: Is it necessary to select team members on the basis of their having attributes that predispose them to engaging in reflective research? And if so, how does one determine the presence, or absence, of those attributes in a prospective team member? (Kressel’s implied assumption appears to be that attributes exist, or not, in the individual, and so the way to ensure those attributes in a team is to select individuals for the team on the basis of possession of those attributes. An alternative hypothesis is that these attributes can be developed. If that were the case, then the task would be to proceed with a program focused on developing these attributes.)

A second aspect of formation of a team able to engage in reflective research relates to the development of a context for, and a culture of, reflective research. Here, inquiry would turn on whether systematic ways of developing the kind of context in which the work of reflecting in a group – formulating and testing hypotheses, and considering alternative designs of action and the relative efficacy of different kinds of action – might be encouraged.

In developing my own approach to reflective research I have chosen to investigate some specific contributions which I consider may be significant in the task of systematically developing a supportive context for inquiry. The specific contributions are the use of materials to develop self- and other- awareness as a preparatory stage to undertaking reflective work on action learning in a group context. For me it is not a question of having, or not having, tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive flexibility and ego strength, or selecting group members on that basis, or focusing development activities on these attributes. Rather it is a question of knowing what can be known about one’s tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive flexibility and ego strength, and vis-a-vis the others in a group where one is endeavouring to explore improvement of practice by an appropriate inquiry process, and working openly and effectively with that knowledge, together.

Further, I have chosen to conduct the investigation by attempting ‘reflective research’ myself, and of my practices associated with this inquiry – thereby undertaking an experimental probe of reflective research – learning-by-doing.
2.3 Personal relatability of Kressel’s concept

The first thing to make clear is that Kressel’s concept of reflective research was ‘relatable’ to me, with my professional practice improvement focus, on a number of fronts. I recognised, in his ideas, intimations of: (1) the cyclic approach to improvement of teaching; (2) the cyclic approach to improvement associated with quality circles – a management application. The idea of ‘case study’ reminded me of the value of reviewing instances and experiences for learning – the critical incident technique, and the operational debrief (as distinct from the therapeutic debrief) which is used to derive learning from non-routine operations or events. The suggestion to develop reflective structures had some resonances with what I had struggled with in trying to capture the complexity of material in interactions in mediations – and reinforced other readings which provided some indications of possible resources to assist the process (Power, 1992; Wade, 1994). Kressel’s argument also stimulated me to review the reservations I had about the often-presented linear nature of ‘scientific method’, and its appropriateness in the study of human activity. As I engaged with Kressel’s material interactively, it prompted me to consider its generic potential – how these ideas might apply in other professional practices. Kressel also remarked on its potential as a model for mediator training. Finally, the material about the peer group, and personal attributes which might be involved in making such a group effective, made connections with my interest in key issues arising in developing management skills (Robbins, 1989; Whetten & Cameron, 1995).

It was the interaction of Kressel’s analysis with material in Whetten and Cameron’s (1995) Developing Management Skills that stimulated a creative design idea for me. Materials in Whetten and Cameron allowed for some exploration of personal attributes on some of the dimensions which Kressel (p.157), identified as being significant to the effectiveness of the team as the reflective vehicle, namely: tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive flexibility and ego strength.
The exploration of these attributes was presented as self-assessment exercises, with a view to developing self-awareness about these dimensions, and was enunciated in the age old terms of ‘knowing yourself’ and the potential for the attributes of the personal – values, cognitive style, attitudes to change and interpersonal needs – to impact on management performance (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pps.56-62).

Furthermore, the underlying structure of the content presented in Whetten and Cameron is built on an explicit learning model focusing on change. They enunciate four major components of their model. The first one relates to accepting the need to change – and involves the individual engaging with the assessment required to identify the gaps where learning is required. The second component relates to the development of understanding of what to change, and here two strands can be seen: the provision of explanatory content, supported by current research findings may contribute to an understanding of the area of management under consideration; then, putting that understanding to use, by engaging with exercises which involve analysing typical practice issues and instances where the application of the content is likely to indicate possible solutions, may contribute to actionable knowledge. Thirdly, the manager (practitioner) needs to commit to and practise the change, and here skill practice exercises, often to be undertaken with peers, are provided. Finally, practitioners are encouraged to act, to apply the change proposed to their actual working context and tasks are set where these skills need to be exercised.

The combination of these two external resources, interacting with my professional life experience, generated a hypothetical professional development activity design for me, which can be expressed in the following terms:

If self- and other-awareness resources, together with structured reflective protocols, and an action learning process, were introduced to a group of peers, would they be assisted in the move to a reflective research approach? Is an outcome of structured preparatory work an improvement in their capacity to engage in their professional practice?

\(^3\) I had been exposed to the critique of the popular view of the linear nature of ‘scientific method’ in 1967 when reading Arthur Koestler’s *Act of Creation* (1964), while undertaking studies to prepare for high school teaching of science. There is a sense in which this inquiry can be seen to be an expression of ‘unfinished business’ – what was a natural bent, inquiry, and vocation, that of teaching others, sharing with others the delights of inquiry, and disrupted by industrial disputation (1968-1972), has returned as a focus of my personal professional development (Reason & Marshall, 2001c).
I deal with the design, rationale and evaluation of my proposed professional development activity in more detail later (Chapters 3-8). In the application of the professional development activity, the generic potential is tested by its use with professionals other than mediators. One aspect of the generic potential lies in the fact that for a number of professional practices, the exercise of interpersonal competence is a key to the professional’s effectiveness which training for a profession often ignores, or overlooks, taking such competence for granted. Within the more generalised context of professional practice, the processes involved in reflective research, especially when using a team approach as one of the vehicles of the reflective work, touch on the professional’s interpersonal competence. Kressel maintains that reflective research, where it is dealing with human interactions, involves the engagement of ‘empathy, persistent questioning [in relation to the problem solving required], attentive listening, curiosity about underlying ideas, and a willingness to tactfully challenge positions’ (p.153). The team interactions provide an opportunity to practise these skills. With peers, as distinct from with clients, the professional is in a relatively ‘safe’ environment, providing that peer support is recognised and well established. Again, with peers, in a safe environment, practitioners can be encouraged to seek and get effective feedback about their interpersonal skill performance. The peer group context then becomes an arena in which deliberate changes of approach to interpersonal interactions can be trialled, evaluated, and refined.

2.4 ‘Practical’ concerns

My interest in Kressel’s concept also expresses some of my ‘practical’ concerns. As a manager, I want to see effective outcomes from effort being achieved, and as efficiently as possible. So, if I am to engage in trying to improve my practice and in trying to assist others with processes to improve their practice, then I will need to know that the process is something that can be put in place without requiring enormous resources. At the very least there needs to be a certain pay-off relation between resources expended and outcomes achieved, and that pay-off needs to be appropriate to the situation. Kressel sees the enacted process to be ‘learning by doing’, as he says ‘the elements of reflective research … can be used in the interest of pure pedagogy with no research agenda, either as a blueprint for practitioners who wish to improve their effectiveness
through systematic reflection or as parts of a formal mediation training program’ (pp.156-7). The dominant empiricist models tend to see research as a relatively static mode for learning, where the researcher works on the data away from the practice. The outcomes, if relevant (and often they are not) then need to be taken up and applied by the practitioner. By comparison, a reflective research concept, given its basis, its principles, and its processes, has a ‘much more dynamic relationship to learning’, which leads to the ‘potential for the immediate improvement of practice’ (p.156). It is this element of Kressel’s argument that finds expression in my proposal to use a reflective research design as a professional development intervention. By doing two things at once – inquiring into, with a view to learning to improve – the reflective research concept appears to offer economy of effort.

Summary

Kressel’s concept of reflective research is an important contribution to my learning and systematic investigation process. My idea of bringing specific inputs to professionals, and in their teams, to help them engage more effectively in inquiry into their own practice, with a view to improving it, grows out of Kressel’s argument, and can be seen to have support in the work of other experienced practitioners. My idea takes up the particular concern of how interpersonal competence, in maintaining openness to difference within a team while investigating practice, can be supported and developed. I find that there are tools available, and arguments that claim that with self- and other-knowledge and a range of suggestions for alternative actions, which have the reputation of having been successful in-practice, people can be encouraged to take a more flexible approach to their current processes of inquiry and problem solving. In my view, the process promises to be practical – it might deliver on efficiency, in that it appears to promise to do two things at once: develop a practice by engaging in aspects of that practice’s specific skill needs (especially relating to interpersonal competence) while undertaking systematic investigation of that practice. But bright ideas can fade in the cold hard light of day, and promises are often unfulfilled. I needed to do some more work to be surer that the bright idea had merit, and that the potential of the concept of reflective research of practice could be realised.
3 PLANNING THE ACTION

Overview

The result of my engagement with Kressel’s views and my own in-practice experiences was to consider whether certain inputs improve the processes of inquiry of professionals, and whether professionals learn to make reasonable changes based on the results of valid and effective inquiry into their practice. Those considerations generated some suggestions for a professional development activity design. The intent of this chapter is to enunciate the design of the professional development activity that I developed from these stimuli, the thinking informing it, and to begin the process of evaluating the design, by testing it with peer experience as documented in the literature, and by preparing to evaluate the design in-action.

3.1 Design in broad terms – Description and rationale

My design for a professional development activity was based on the following aims:

- To develop self-awareness as a key to personal and interpersonal interactive practice, especially for improving a person’s practice, by developing more open group processes in which to conduct inquiry of practice concerns
- To utilise and develop the personal and interpersonal potentialities of participants engaging in group processes as sources of diversity which could be mobilised to identify and test the assumptions involved in scoping the change needed to improve practice
- To enhance the participants’ understanding of the thinking-action nexus in-practice
- To honour the real-life context of engaging with change of practice in the complex multifaceted environment in which practice operates
My design draws on Argyris’ concept of ‘design causality’ (Argyris, 1993), which he contrasts with Mill’s theory of causality ‘that is dominant in research’ (p.257) and other forms of causality namely pattern causality and component causality. Argyris describes and explains design causality for a practitioner as follows:

‘… directors and others managed their lives by defining variables in order to overdetermine causality – that is, to try and make certain that what they intended to occur would occur … If Mill’s methods represent precision as distinct from sloppiness, the individuals in our study appear to have learned how to be precisely sloppy - a concept of rigour alien to Mill’s views.’ (p.260).

Argyris goes on to claim that ‘design causality is more fundamental than pattern or component causality’ since amongst other things ‘it explains how the pattern and its components arose in the first place’ (p.266). According to Argyris, design causality is premised on understandings of humans that they

‘… strive to achieve their intended consequences … The more success they have in these endeavors, the stronger their sense of efficacy, competence, and self-esteem. Embedded in this [view] is the notion that human beings have reasons (conscious or unconscious) for acting as they do and that the reasons are related to mastery and self-regulation.’ (p.267).

My design seeks to mix certain kinds of inputs, over time, with the contextually informed experience available in a group of practitioners from their operating knowledge, in order to work on increased awareness of the practitioner’s thinking-action complex in their in-practice interactions. The inputs relate to the development of self- and other-awareness, the use of structured reflection to do work on the thinking-action complex, and providing these inputs to a group of peers. Since I was facilitating this professional development activity, the particular inputs chosen represent those inputs that I consider that I can work with comfortably and effectively. In each of the categories of input a variety of materials are available from published sources. I consider that any such tools may contribute to the process as long as the professional development practitioner has some awareness of what they have chosen and why. At this point, as at other points, Argyris’ practitioner’s design causality applies – I am precisely sloppy. My contention is that a certain suite of materials is needed to build the capacity of individuals, in a group context, to engage in effective inquiry of their own practice activity.
My selection of particular inputs is based on their meeting certain criteria. The inputs need to satisfy my judgement that the tools chosen offer a reasonable quality of independent resource support for the practitioner, and are accessible in the public arena, or have been developed from material in the public arena. Other independent research and comparative information about such tools needs to be readily available in order to give access to information about those variables from a broader base of people than that which is available within a small group. The tools need to be relatively quick and easy to administer. The tools need to allow for the systematic addressing of particular aspects of what might be involved in understanding the meaning of thinking-acting in an interpersonal engagement, and by a person in-practice, and especially to contribute something towards comprehending the general, likely sources of difference that might arise in a dispute, or might provide alternative explanations of effective solution options. The tools need to involve a self-assessment component as part of the process to build some self-awareness, and need to address a number of independent factors, or expressions of personality and personal approach to the world, in order to build a sense of meaning, or understanding, of the complex involved as individuals act, and as the professional begins to focus on the task of exploring thinking-acting.

The tools are administered (the self-assessment is conducted) in the group context, both for efficiency of time, and for additional effectiveness arising from the potentialities of the group interactions and the group as an entity, working together. The sources are external, have been validated for ordinary ‘lay’ use and include some indications of typical results in a general population. The ‘distance’ of their application is at the ‘formal’ level, so hearing uncomfortable information is not too threatening in the first instance. When exploring the meaning together – same information at the same time – the comparisons within the group and with other groups (eg general population group results) adds to meaning. Participants see the variety in the group, and the processes of recognising variety and respecting difference leads to a growing understanding of the nature of the individuals within the group, their relative strengths, their relative capacities to be able to contribute in different ways, for different goals and purposes. Participants have access to sharing of instances that illustrate the concepts from the experience of the different individuals in the group and their variety of experience. The sharing of these experiences builds a growing understanding of differences, and valuing
of differences, and some common ground on which other discussions and instances can be shared and built.

3.2 Particulars of the design – Description and rationale

The following enunciation of particulars of the design is for convenience of description. Most of the inputs have multiple contributions, and the components interact. Self-awareness contributes to the understanding of the personal – the self, the individual. For the attentive person, self-awareness also contributes to an understanding of other, at an individual level, and in interpersonal interactions, including group processes. Similarly, interactions in a group process can inform self-awareness of personal responses to situations that raise issues in the thinking-action dynamic, for both the peer group’s internal activities, and the professional’s interactions in groups external to the professional development activity. In enunciating the particulars of the design under separate categories, I want to highlight again the interactivity, and indicate that the ordering is not intended to privilege analytical separateness over a more holistic, synthesising interdependence. As it is, the ordering represents one of the limitations of this particular form of expression, the implications of which I, for one, do not readily, or sufficiently, recognise.

3.2.1 Inputs to develop self- and other- awareness for personal and interpersonal interactions

The particular tools and inputs that I use to open up discussion on the personal and interpersonal of professional practice interactions are (see Glossary for details):

- MBTI – Myers-Briggs Type Indicator for personal style differences (Briggs Myers, McCauley, Quenk, & Hammer, 1998)
- Self management tools – Tolerance of Ambiguity; Locus of Control; others as appropriate (sourced from Whetten & Cameron, 1995 and various other published materials)
- Some analytical work on values held – human nature in relationships (sourced from Gibson, 1997, Family Dispute Resolution studies; Robbins, 1989)
I have chosen to use the MBTI because:

- I need some tool to explore the aspects of behaviour covered by the tool and I preferred not to adopt other practitioners’ performance presentation of popular four quadrant models, as the way to raise the issues associated with different personality preferences and styles and capacities for principled adaptability of behavioural responses in stressful contexts.
- I think that its 16 categories are likely to be closer to life experience than four categories, given the nature and expression of diversity. But it is only a model!
- Written support material is readily available for it, and for a variety of applications of the categories and combinations of the categories in a dynamic relationship, including support resources that challenge people, gently, about aspects of these personal preferences that dynamically produce significant performance weaknesses. This gives participants access to ongoing work on understanding the categories for themselves.
- The combination of the N/S and T/F dimensions provides access to an explanatory model of different cognitive styles, and understanding their respective strengths and weaknesses and opens up discussion of the issue of cognitive flexibility that Kressel considers to be a significant aspect of reflective research, and in a group (Kressel, 1997, p.157), and was the base of the Whetten and Cameron tool for developing self-awareness on cognitive style (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.42-50).

The MBTI is not the only tool used or recognised, and its juxtaposition with information from other tools is explicitly used to test its predictive capacity, and to indicate the complexity that is the individual, and the individual response in context. Additional principles are drawn on to make the most of the implications of understanding a tendency to prefer, and the comfortableness that develops in interactions as a consequence. For instance, I use it in conjunction with the concept of the importance of recognising and valuing diversity with its Equal Employment Opportunity aspects and its application for synergy in group capacity. I also use it with the concepts raised by the Johari window model (Luft, 1984) to talk about the known and the knowable, and the value and purpose of disclosure, and getting valid information from others about self, to help develop self-knowledge. I use it with the Tolerance of Ambiguity tool, and the Locus of Control tool to explore different aspects of self-knowledge, and its
implications, and to see how one explains or predicts (or does not explain or predict) the other. I also use a number of other diagnostic tools to help develop self-awareness in behaviour, and to explore the implications for one’s personal style in-practice. I take the position that I need to know myself, as fully as possible, to know what I can do, how I can change, in a way that is congruent with my own fundamental values, so that integrity is maintained.

In choosing the MBTI, I also recognise that others can mount a significant and persistent criticism of the use, or a reliance on the tool, and that I am not in a position to provide a full, technical critique of the tool. Similar criticism arises for all other personality models available, and on similar grounds, usually related to the fact that it does not, and cannot, explain all human behaviour, or all the behaviour of a particular person. In my view some of that criticism comes from a reluctance to become self-aware on some aspects of personality that relate to or challenge self-identity. I have seen individual responses to its use which give me cause to worry about its use and abuse – but any tool or process is subject to good use and unethical misuse. It is not so much the adequacy, or otherwise, of the tool, as the capacities and intents of its users. In the case of professionals whose background includes study of the psychology of the person, I understand the criticism to represent, appropriately, their in-practice experience, and in-practice preferred theories-in-use.

I am satisfied that, as a tool, it provides me with sufficient useful information to apply it in the professional development activity context. I am aware of the nature of the empirical support for the categories in the model and that its conceptual basis is related to the Jungian psychodynamic theory of personality. When its use raises questioning about its quality, then that questioning becomes the starting point to engage in appropriate discussion about inquiry, inquiry findings, model development, and that whole process as an aspect of the development of professional practice. In a context with professionals with a technical background of personality and behaviours and its in-practice knowledge, I would seek to open up the discussion of what they use in their practice, how satisfied they are with those models, and where they have noticed that those models ‘break down’.

Locus of Control (LOC) (derived from Rotter’s tool, is also sourced from Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.50, 685) and is a factor that may be involved in a capacity to be able to let go which may need to be acknowledged in certain practice situations (Kressel, 1997, p.149).

The choice of other self-management diagnostic tools depends on the issues or themes that develop from the discussion of the particular group’s in-practice needs. Material that might be required includes tools to develop self-awareness on the various aspects of management practice (Whetten & Cameron, 1995); team roles and team work (Robbins, 1989); stress management (Whetten & Cameron, 1995); conflict management style (David, 1996); an individual’s reliance on various dimensions of intelligence (Gardner, 1993); an individual’s approach to organisational issues (Handy, 1978).

The third thrust of self-awareness development is the focus on working at making explicit the participant’s values-in-use. Here I have chosen the X-Y Human Values schedule, (Robbins, 1989, pp. 12-13, 24-25) because this list is simpler and less time consuming than the Whetten and Cameron material (the Whetten and Cameron material is then available for more in-depth analysis if the particular group’s in-practice needs suggests that further self-assessment and awareness work on values is needed), and the Robbins material deals with values expressed in workplace relationships.

Underlying the emphasis on the personal in the self- and other- awareness, and in interactions including group processes, is the understanding that interpersonal effectiveness comes from the ‘know yourself” position (Whetten & Cameron, 1995).
3.2.2 **Inputs to develop understanding of group processes**

The particular inputs that I use to develop an understanding of group processes are (see details in the Glossary):

- Johari window (Luft, 1984) and other models for interpersonal interactions, (negotiation matrix of conflicting values: relationship vs personal goals, sourced from David, 1996 and Dispute Resolution studies handouts)

- A safe environment for practising Model II behaviour. A learning or research frame can be considered ‘safe’ – openness to new ideas and experimenting. In this case, more needs to be done, and is usually provided, in part, by the facilitator operating with, and so modelling as far as possible, Model II values (Argyris, 1993, pp.61-2, 246; Putnam, 1991, p.146).

- The development of the team for joint inquiry efforts. Components include joint analysis (structured; debrief or other protocol); company of peers (accountability); social learning; diversity for different sources of alternative theories for challenging unexamined assumptions (Kressel, 1997, pp.152-3, 155-7).

The Johari Window Model reinforces the role of disclosure in developing more valid information that then has links with Argyris and Schön’s concept of Model II behaviour. In exploring the potential role of feedback in assisting with the development of self-awareness, the model hints at the role of the other, the outsider, the third party neutral, the professional, and the sensitivity aspect involved with working with material from within the blind window.

The expression of the Argyris and Schön Model II values for group inquiry interactions was chosen because of its focus on the element of action, and actionable knowledge, in learning to change and for learning about change. In addition, its focus on the nature and quality of inquiry required for in-practice investigation and on the autonomy and responsibility of individual actors in both inquiry and action is particularly appropriate for the issue of dealing with the improvement of a professional practice.

Underlying the use of the group in the overall activity of working with the practice knowledge of peers to improve practice, is the understanding of the way in which
knowledge is a social construction: something that we work together on in some sort of dialectic process (Kramer & Messick, 1995). The group is also a site of interpersonal interactions. Consequently, the group can be a site where a person may trial actions intended to improve interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, the group is a site where the experience of the form and expression of social structures occurs, even if only in a rudimentary way, compared to larger organisations and pervasive and persistent social and political institutions. Again, the group can therefore be a site for trialling actions intended to improve the construction and expression of social structures, including the social activity of the inquiry involved in developing knowledge.

3.2.3 Inputs and processes to develop the thinking-action complex

The particular inputs and processes that I use to develop an understanding of the thinking-action complex are:

- Opportunity for systematic data collection, especially of thinking, by structured reflection (Kressel, 1997, pp.149, 155)
- Selection of focus of data collection (options include: critical incident; surprise; discomfort; undisclosed self-censored thinking; previous difficulties negotiated within team) (Kressel, 1997, pp.149-150, 155)
- Analysis and extension of thinking – De Bono’s 6 Hats (DeBono, 1985) (an in-practice development of the design)

The focus on structured reflection, to capture the content of the thinking, is fundamental to any reflective research concept and is supported by the literature of learning from experience (Allen, 1998; Boud, 2001; Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993; Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Boud & Miller, 1996; Boud & Walker, 1998; Kressel, 1997; Loughran, 1996; Schön, 1983, 1987).

The engagement in critical reflection, in a group, to explore otherwise unexamined assumptions, and especially of established socio-political structures and relationships, is reported to be fundamental to effective inquiry of the human dimension. Here it is acknowledged that both subject and object, individual and social implications are in play, and often in an interactive way (Brookfield, 1995; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Mezirow, 1991). Any inquiry, designed to improve professional practice, needs to
establish appropriate mechanisms for such critical reflection to occur, and be shared and tested.

The selection of focus of data collection involves exploration of the current practice concerns and negotiation of which to focus on with the group. It is this exploration and negotiation that ensures that the focus is relevant and timely, and specific to the particular group’s immediate needs. In the event of the process continuing, such a focus needs to be reviewed and renegotiated, from time to time, to continue to make sure that the practice imperatives focused on remain current.

The in-practice development of the design, to use the De Bono 6 hats process, was chosen because of its availability (DeBono, 1985, 1992), and the way it complemented the Argyris and Schön Model II process. The concept of 6 hats allows for focusing separately and then interactively with a variety of thinking aspects, including elements that are difficult to articulate, and the game-like element of the putting on of a hat, to play a role, provides for the thinking to be separated from the person and the personal (see details in the Glossary).

3.2.4 Role of time

Time, as an element of design, expresses itself in a number of ways:

- the sequencing of inputs
- the development of understanding in use: introduction, application, and recapitulation with deepening awareness of levels of complexity
- the provision of time, in a time-scarce context, to focus on particular processes indicates priority, importance, and requisite effort to investigate the complexity involved
- the period between the inputs when professionals are back in their practice has a role to play in both mobilising focal awareness generated by the application of the inputs in the group sessions to ‘see’ its application to current practice incidents, and in increasing the quality of data collected from the in-practice experience
The specifics of the designed staging of presentation of input, and development of the process of inquiry were indicated in the overview material issued to the participants. (See Designed Session Schedule Appendix 3.2.4A; and Overview Enunciated in Ethics Committee Submission, Appendix 3.2.4B)

Also, time expresses itself in the logistics of the implementation. The premises that underlie this are as follows:

- Within the concept of time, the view that not everything can be done at once, and that in the complexity that is professional practice, working at the change, in parts and stages, becomes, therefore, important to recognise and provide for (Schön, 1987, p.272)
- Within the concept of time, a secondary concept of development – that some things need to be in place before others can emerge
- With the passage of time variation can be discerned (Marton & Booth, 1997)

The intentions, over the staged structure of the professional development activity, were as follows:

**What I aimed to do in Stage 1**
- develop self-awareness (and at the same time other-awareness) by working with a common model, building a common vocabulary for discussing elements of behaviour or patterns of behaviour
- develop group cohesiveness – to have sufficient trust to be able to critically confront

**What I aimed to do in Stage 2**
- use the concepts introduced in Stage 1 to undertake the exploration of ‘own practice’
- build an explicated understanding of ‘own practices’
- start to develop ideas or designs for alternative actions which might be more effective, actions based on model of understanding, which do not breach individual’s concept of congruence with self and yet which challenge or extend current performance (moving from Model I behaviour to Model II behaviour)

**What I aimed to do in Stage 3**
- encourage the trialing of designed changes
- reporting back on findings and reviewing models in the light of these findings
- building an understanding of the cycling process of building understanding and effectiveness
3.2.5 Role of context

The external context of a professional’s practice is the particular place where any change proposed is expected to be enacted. That particular place operates within a wider external context where inputs and contributions from the ethical standards of the particular professional practice under consideration apply, and includes the more local expressions of the particular practice under investigation where the broader professional practice norms may be modified in order to manage local, temporal, and specific conditions in which the practice operates.

Another external context is that generated by the implementation of the designed professional development activity itself, and arises from the way that it is framed and presented organisationally, namely as a professional development exercise, where an outsider (expert; in this case me) has input relevant for professional development, and in this particular case when the research project is framed as university studies (rather than being a commercial engagement, say).

The internal context of the group formed to undertake the professional development activity has a designed character. It will also have an actual character. The extent to which the design matches the actual will have an impact on the capacity of the design to reach its potential. In some cases the group may be a work-group: established before this activity, and anticipating operating in ongoing relationships after the activity. In other cases, the group for the designed professional development activity may be only a group for the purposes of the professional development activity. However, as a result of the professional development activity, any group, whether an established and continuing work group or not, may also determine to act on some professional practice concern, and that action may require the expression of the internal context of a corporate entity.

The internal context of each of the individuals present in the professional development process is another significant source which contributes input, and represents points of constraint, in the consideration of the thinking-actioning and evaluations of its feasibility, given the nature of the external context.
The design intended to work, in the first instance, on the internal group context. The objectives of such work include the development of open and robust group processes able to confront differences effectively and remain cohesive while maintaining productive differences (Argyris, 1993; Bormann, 1990; Hackman, 1990; Luft, 1984; Lumsden, 1993; Moore, 1994; Zander, 1994). Within such a context, it was anticipated that the capacity to jointly investigate significant factors operating in their practice situations would be enhanced (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Heron & Reason, 2001; Schön, 1991).

3.2.6 Role of the intentional and the unintentional

Other inputs, derived from the facilitator’s practice and capacity to engage with the participants, as others, and derived from the participants’ practice and capacity to engage with others also operate. These capacities generate intentional and unintentional inputs that the design seeks to mobilise or deal with.

- To the extent that the facilitator is consciously, and intentionally, selecting these inputs, to bring them to bear in the intervention, the facilitator will be able to explain his or her rationale to the other participants.
- To the extent that the facilitator is unaware of certain elements of her or his own practice, there is the potential for ‘unintended’ inputs and consequences. As will be dealt with in Chapters 4–8, one of the tasks, in this research project, was for the researcher-facilitator to work on the ‘unaware’ to move it into the ‘aware’ arena, for themselves, as well as for the other participants. Such work is needed so that the ‘unintentional’ can be recognised and evaluated. The elements of the unintentional, which contribute to the effectiveness of a person’s practice, can then be explored for its value as a learning resource.

In a like manner, the intentional or unintentional inputs of the participants that contribute to or inhibit the processing of the group, need to be worked on to make them explicit and examine the way in which they are impacting on the activity, and how that impact can be explained.

Where the enunciation and open evaluation of the intentional and the unintentional are possible, and are accomplished, then a free and informed resolve to attempt to change
can be taken. The individual and the group can agree to focus on any attempts to make such a change. Practising such an attempt to change, in the peer group, then becomes a resource from which similar intentional responses and change, in other contexts, can be considered. Such a consideration is now informed by the kind of knowing that develops with doing.

### 3.2.7 Whole design rationale

I have mentioned previously: the design relies on the whole – its various components will be expected to interact and are interdependent. As a whole, I can describe the design, and identify more of its rationale under a number of different frames. As I identify more of the rationale, I would note that what is presented here has passed through the screen of my own professional practice standards, that although I do not always enunciate the critique, I have measured it against these implicit rules. What is presented here is material that, when I read it, made sense to me. It is material that matched with my practice experience but which also went further than I have gone, in conscious awareness, before. It challenged my level of thinking, clarifying what might have been implicit before, and in that clarification suggested further and different possible actions. As I tested it mentally against my otherwise implicit professional standards, I found that I was prepared to receive this input, and to work with it to try and make it part of my practice. When I work with it, I do not expect to be embarrassed by unimaginable unintended consequences, I do not expect to be shown up as being incompetent.

### Focus on action

In the whole, one of the aspects of my design for the professional development activity is the focus on action, on the in-practice action where improvement is being sought. The design is looking to develop understanding of when and why a certain practice approach is not effective. In those terms the design assumes intentional and purposeful human activity, and draws on the understanding and inquiry of action, and change in action, addressed in the literature of action science, action research, action learning. These include:

- Developing intentional actions involves effective inquiry, including tapping the resources of reflection on experience available from self and others involved in

- Changing current actions to deliver on intentions involves free and informed choice (Argyris & Schön, 1996)
- Having the courage to act is needed, represented in Schein’s concept of emotional effectiveness (cited in Dick, 1997)
- Committing to the process of seeking valid information and allowing all actors to act on free informed choice is needed as an ongoing operational condition (Argyris & Schön, 1996)
- Effective action learning leads to actionable knowledge (Argyris, 1993; Mumford, 1997; Pedler, 1997)

Adult learning
In the whole, another aspect of my design relates to the context: of learning for adults, by adults, with adults. Consequently, it draws on a number of assumptions and theories of adult learning, including the implications of recognising the role of intentional and purposeful human activity noted above, notably that:

- Directing the processes of learning to issues of immediate relevance is effective (Abadzi, 1990; Burns, 1995; Power, 1992), perhaps because of an adult’s pragmatism and the effectiveness of focusing learning, and on the relevant of experienced practice (Bowden & Marton, 1998; Dewey, 1933; Kressel, 1997)
- Working with adult’s experience is important (Burns, 1995; Scott, 1998)
- Respecting adult autonomy and independence is a significant part of ensuring participants’ engagement in active learning (Burns, 1995; Heron, 1999)

Reflective practice
In the whole, a third aspect of my design involves the development of reflective work to undertake data collection of the in-practice action and response, and of the practitioner thinking and evaluation. Consequently, my design draws on assumptions and understandings of reflective practice and its role in learning from experience, including:
• Reflective work is needed to make learning from experience effective (Boud et al., 1993; Boud et al., 1985; Boud & Miller, 1996)

• Reflective work is needed to capture awareness of elements of responses, whether thinking, action, or affect, that are non-cognitive, including barriers to learning from experience (Boud et al., 1993; Boud et al., 1985; Boud & Miller, 1996), and the importance of the dimension of affect as the ground of action (Heron, 1985, 1992, 1996b, 1999)

• Reflective practice is necessary to explore the practice situation with its ambiguity, complexity, uniqueness and conflictual components (Schön, 1983, 1987, 1995)

• Critical reflective work is required to gather information about practitioner’s assumptions and theories-in-use (Boud et al., 1985; Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 1991)

• Structured reflective work, and changes in structures used, helps develop reflective technique, and helps focus the inquiry process and retain vitality over time, and particular structures may be needed to move reflection into areas that are significant for critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995; Fook, 1996; Kressel, 1997; Power, 1992; Smyth, 1996; Wade, 1994)

• Reflective work in a group context, and on elements of personal practice, including interpersonal interactions, is needed to help manage both the complexity involved and the risk of bias in self-study of practice (Heron & Reason, 2001; Kressel, 1997)

• Reflective work in a group context may need certain interpersonal capacities to be in place, or developed, for such reflective work to be effective (Heron & Reason, 2001; Kressel, 1997; Schön, 1991)

Professional development

The whole design also has elements that respond to the literature of professional development, where it is indicated that improvements in effective professional development education arise when it is focused as follows:

• It is important to use information derived from work that involves self-assessment (Klevans, Smutz, Shuman, & Bershad, 1992). Such an approach allows the adult professional to identify what learning they need. Such
identification is a first step by adult professionals in committing to effort in learning in that area, perhaps, in part, because it is dealing with their current (timely) learning needs (relevance).

- Significant learning is available in the social context of work, and with and from peers (Ellerington, Marsick, & Dechant, 1992; Lovin, 1992). Indeed, Wenger has mounted an argument that relies on understanding learning as something that develops naturally within a person’s various social contexts, and the learning that constitutes proficiency and expertise in a professional practice is especially dependent on such a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 1998).

- The practice context is significant and recognising that practice knowledge is, and needs to be, different from generalised knowledge, and that learning to learn how to develop this kind of knowledge is a significant and ongoing task in the development of a professional (Boreham, 1992; Farmer, Buckmaster, & Le Grand, 1992; Jennett & Pearson, 1992).

- The learning and expertise of the professional practice that is beyond the technical rationality developed in formal preparatory professional education is developed, primarily, by ‘reflective practice’ (Schön, 1983, 1987, 1995, 1991).

**Personal experience**

The whole design is also informed by my own extensive experience of practice. I assume that what I have experienced, as I have continued to learn, in-practice, will be relatable to other professionals, the participants undertaking my professional development design. These understandings include:

- Some learning is not a matter of the ‘quick fix’, it involves progress towards more aware intentional activity, with responsiveness to interactions arising out of actions, including intentional flexibility to interactive responses

- The move from basic competence to expertise is a question of focus on depth not breadth

- What I want to know determines how I go about finding out

- What I want to know that is of significance to me in the practice situation relates to the particular of the presenting problem, in its context (see also Toulmin, 1996)
In dealing with particular presenting problems, in their context, I need a process to help me keep open, to help me make adjustments, and I have found two components help me stay open: (1) other frames of looking at the presenting problem (see also Schön, 1983, 1991); (2) other thinkers to challenge me when I have closed: the dialectic of the critical process (Brookfield, 1995; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Heron & Reason, 2001; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Marsick & Watkins, 1991; Mezirow, 1991)

I have an eclectic collection of ‘models’ on the basis of: if I am limited to only a few, or a collection which is substantially ‘cohesive’, they will not be flexible enough to be able to deal with ambiguity, complexity, uniqueness, conflictual – (see also Bob Dick’s ‘overdetermined’ input to deliver on change (Dick, 2000b); Argyris’ concept of ‘design causality’ and the ‘precisely sloppy’ practice-oriented response (Argyris, 1993, pp.260, 266); and multiple models are a source of variation, and variation has a significant role to play in perception and learning (Bowden & Marton, 1998; Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton & Trigwell, 2000))

As a whole the design seeks to develop more explicit intentionality in the total process of action science/research/learning. Action and reflection are attended to systematically, and the iterative cycle of repeated interactions of action and reflection is applied, in order that issues of complexity, and the particularities arising in-practice, might be addressed. To the extent that this section enunciates the thinking informing the action (the professional development activity design) it is now open to testing – testing with and by the documented knowledge of other peer practitioners, and testing in and by some in-action implementations. Further, by opening itself to the same processes that it is proposing, for the improvement of practice, the reflexive nature of this inquiry is demonstrated.

3.3 How I sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the design

The underlying principles of reflective research seek to test both the thinking and the acting, and thinking and acting in relation to one another. Consequently, it is appropriate to apply two distinct mechanisms of evaluation to the professional
development activity design: (1) testing the design against the experience and thinking of others; and (2) testing the design in-practice.

3.3.1 Testing the design against the experience and thinking of others

It has been my intention that the above material indicate how much, and what of the design of my professional development activity, relies on, or matches with, the documented work of others. In describing the design and presenting the rationale, and its relationship to the documented work of others, I have also tried to convey some of how I have tested the design against the empirical findings and theoretical assertions of the literature. My testing involved using my professional practice satisfaction criteria: here is material that is different from what I could have stated as my understanding of my practice, and that I am prepared now to try, and to try and use, because it relates sufficiently to my experience, addresses some of the inadequacies that I recognise in my practice, and develops my understanding of that experience in a way that means I do not expect to get into trouble when I do make the change developed from the interaction with the literature in order to improve my current practice.

During that process, a number of challenges to, and dilemmas of, the design and its assumptions arose.

One such challenge came from my reading of Brookfield (1995, p.82):

.. as Karl and Kopf (1993) point out, "There is no support for the assumption that the more people know about their behaviour, the more they will improve it" (p.309)

A second challenge came from my reading of De Laine (1997, p.303) where a discussion about the ethics of self-disclosure, in terms of power relationships, and ingratiation and social indebtedness, noted the following:

Lee (1993, p.109) refers to a number of micro-sociological studies of power and exchange that suggest ‘reciprocity and self-revelations can be deployed strategically in social relationships. They may be used, for example, as ingratiation tactics, or as a means of increasing the social indebtedness of the other’. In other words, ‘strategies used to ensure a non-hierarchical relations between interviewer and respondent can come to be regarded simply as a set of techniques divorced from the ethical foundations upon which they are based’ (ibid).
Another challenge comes from a dilemma concerning the question of when, in-practice, is it possible, and appropriate, to introduce and require critical thinking, at the level that relates to the challenging of assumptions. A number of authors indicate that the capacity to critically explore assumptions is important for developing professional practices involving the interpersonal and the social (Brookfield, 1995; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Fook, 1996). A number of authors indicate that the timing of requiring such a capacity is not during professional formation studies, or professional initiation, when a lot of cognitive effort is required to integrate new content, but rather with ongoing professional development, when a reservoir of experience has been established and when it is reasonable to expect a practitioner to draw on that resource (Robins & Webster, 1999; Schön, 1987). The dilemma that arises is this: by the time the professional reaches that stage, unless substantially unsettled by practice experience, a practitioner may well have a satisfied and closed mindset, based on an inappropriate epistemology and associated understanding, combined with being captured in the hegemony of established professional practice norms, and the conservatism inherent in that. Alternately, a practitioner may be engaging in inappropriate practice: malpractice or oppressive responses to change. In either case, the task in changing learnt responses in order to improving practice is going to involve significant levels of ‘unlearning’.

These three strands of the design and its application – what assumptions are being taken for granted, what processes constitute an ethical dilemma, and what timing of challenging assumptions by ethical processes, including relevant self-disclosure, is likely to be most effective – find expression for me in challenging a significant aspect of my person and practice. One of the meaning perspectives that I use in checking my practice comes from the Christian tradition. I have found the wisdom, available from commitment to the claims of this other body of literature, instructive to the living of my whole life, including my professional practice. Part of my practice understanding includes the view that the insights of Christian belief contain general truths about our world, and our relationships in this world. I am unsure to what extent my acceptance of those insights and my experience of their efficacy inform and contribute to my capacity to experience change, and to undertake change in thinking and acting. If I do not disclose this in the course of the professional development design activity, as part of action learning, of being able to undertake effective critical thinking about aspects of self-awareness and other-awareness in group processes, then my non-disclosure
represents a fundamental incongruence with the design. Such non-disclosure neither opens my thinking in this area to challenge, nor provides information that I have from ‘another’ source so that it might be open to others’ testing and validation. If tested, and found valid and relevant to the processes at hand, then such a perception can be made available as one of the resources for change another might need to have to be able to access further significant change.

All four challenges remain unresolved for me at this point.

3.3.2 Testing the design effectiveness in-practice

The second part of testing the design, in-practice, involved implementing the professional development activity with two groups of professionals. The details of the implementation in-practice are reported in Chapters 5-8.

The ‘move testing experiment’, where the practitioner tries the intentional action developed from reflective work on the presenting problem and observes and reflects on the outcomes (Schön, 1987, p.70), was in two parts: (1) implementing the professional development activity with others, and (2) engaging with the same elements of the professional development design myself, as a practitioner. The move testing questions can be stated as follows: (1) If certain materials, together with structured reflective protocols, and an action learning process, were introduced to a group of peers, would these materials and processes assist the participants in the move to a reflective research approach? Is an outcome of this preparatory work an improvement in their capacity to engage in their professional practice? (2) Can I enact reflective research of practice about my own practice? Do the materials and processes of the designed professional development activity assist me as I seek to take such action? And if I can, and when I do enact reflective research of practice, does it lead to improvement in my practice?

The first task of evaluating the design in-practice is to identify changes that could indicate that the introduction of these materials to a group of peers has resulted in an improvement in their capacity to engage in their professional practice. The details of preparing for such an evaluation are developed in the next section. It is another design task – how do I design the inquiry? The second task is to conduct the in-action testing and see what the evidence shows. This is detailed in Chapters 4-8.


3.4 Planning to test the design in action

My intent was to put Kressel’s model of reflective research to a prospective practical test. Such a testing involved undertaking a practitioner self-study, by using particular techniques to streamline reflective work and to identify incidents in practice to focus on, in order to deliver usable knowledge (Kressel, 1997, pp.146, 147, 155). My practice would be in view, and I would be working with myself, with these same self-awareness tools, in the company of practitioners, with a structured reflective protocol, and a focus of learning, by acting, about my actions and their effectiveness.

The intent of my professional development activity design was to develop a team of practitioners as the vehicle of reflection (Kressel, 1997, p.152). In progressing that, I was subjecting a reflective hypothesis about the development of a team of practitioners to what Kressel calls an experimental probe (Kressel, 1997, p.153). The experimental probe was to conduct a professional development activity with two groups of five professionals, the first a group of adult basic education practitioners, and the second group of senior clinical nurse consultants.

As the professional development activity was conducted, I would endeavour to evaluate the design, in terms of its overall objective to assist a group of peers work at an improvement in their capacity to engage in their professional practice. I would also evaluate the design, for my own purposes, as facilitator and designer. The questions in view relating to the design and its facilitation are concerned with how it was able to be enacted. The questions in view about the design per se are concerned with how the outcomes matched the design argument: that delivering certain components (self- and other-awareness resources, structured reflective protocols and the action learning process, to a group of peers) would produce the improvement looked for.

As far as possible, the inquiry techniques of data collection and analysis were to be consistent with what are the reasonable expectations of in-practice contexts and capacities.
3.4.1 Design intentions of the evaluation of the activity enacted with others

Since the design was built on developing self-awareness and since self-awareness also implies self-assessment, the first endeavour was to construct something which participants could use, prior to any inputs, to self-assess on the relevant dimensions of self-awareness that would be addressed in the professional development activity. Further, since the design was also built on active group processes, a group self-assessment would be part of the process. Thirdly, an outcome of the design was expected to be demonstrable improvement in practice, and other stakeholders have an interest in that. Therefore, subject to agreement with the participants, some process of external assessment, either with others having an organisational interest or with clients, was to be determined. This three-way assessment would constitute an attempt at triangulation – seeking for progressively independent and distanced approaches to balance the possible bias of self-study.

I used the program evaluation design suggestions extant (Hawe, Degeling, & Hall, 1990; Patton, 1982). I worked up an argument for the thesis using Toulmin’s argument structure, as explicated in Dunn’s work, as an externally sourced analytical tool, independent of my routine thinking processes (Dunn, 1982 and see Appendix 3.4.1.1). From that I identified which elements of change, at an individual level, might match with the professional development activity design intentions. From this I crafted a Benchmark Questionnaire for use before the designed inputs, and a Progress Questionnaire for use during the project and at the end of the negotiated program (See Appendix 3.4.1.2 and Appendix 3.4.1.3). The Benchmark and Progress Questionnaires would give the participants a tool with which to undertake self-assessment of change on the dimensions that were being addressed in the professional development activity.

I had one personal, pragmatic evaluative criterion for the professional development activity and group process as a whole, informed by my experience: if the group resolved to, and continued to meet after the conclusion of the ‘research’ engagement, then the design could be judged a success. The basis of such a judgement is that busy professionals do make time for what they find to be really valuable.
3.4.2 Design intentions of the evaluation of the self-study

Concurrent with the preparations to contact a group and begin the professional development activity, I explored the potential to participate, as a peer, in a group, with others working in a like area. It was, for me, a matter of congruence. I needed to be doing what I was asking others to do. I needed to find out, by doing, where it was easy for me, and where it was difficult for me.

This intentional activity resulted in interactions with the group of active participants of an email-based community of practice of action researchers: the Action Research List ARLIST, and its affiliates ARMNET, ACTLIST, PAR-ANNOUNCE, TACIT. (For further information see http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html). I also engaged with interactions with peers preparing to undertake research, peers involved in research, and an autonomy laboratory for practising facilitators (Heron, 1999, pp.96-7). The intent was to find and join a group with whom I could interact as a peer with others who were conducting ‘participatory’ action research or action learning processes with other professionals. While looking for such a group I was also aware of a dilemma: if my thesis was soundly based, then such a group would also need to build self-awareness, and in that group. For me to bring my material to such a group of peers would need me to move out of the peer role for at least the input of the relevant self-awareness materials.

3.4.3 The ‘window of opportunity’

Beyond these intentional steps to evaluate, I was in there, as a practitioner, applying reflective work to my own practices, seeking to learn from my experience. One of the objects of that learning was learning about evaluation and how to evaluate. Part of that learning includes the inquiry into (the process of beginning to understand) my own implicit processes of evaluation in the practice situation. Once the implicit was enunciated, it was open to review. If informed review indicated change was necessary, the informed review might also indicate a reasonable alternative action which might allow me to make a change that could improve my current practice of evaluation in the practice situation. The following five chapters indicate how this developed for me, and to what extent I was able to make the most of this window of opportunity.
Summary

In this chapter I have shown how I have considered the professional development activity design that arose from my association of ideas from Dispute Resolution studies together with concerns and experience arising from my practice of staff development, and of the interpersonal aspects of management. I have explored the constituents of the design and tested the reasoning associated with the design and the choice of inputs and supportive tools. As the design is enunciated it becomes open to the testing of peers. One of the sources of practice knowledge used for such testing is the literature. Another is the in-practice knowledge of peer practitioners. From feedback from both these sources, I considered I had an innovative and reasonable design to contribute to learning to change for professional practitioners. As the design is enunciated it is possible to consider how the effectiveness of such a design might be tested, in-action. I have shared how I anticipated evaluating the effectiveness of the design. The next test is the in-practice actioning: Does it work? Can I do it? What evidence am I using to answer those questions? How am I using that evidence to come to evaluative conclusions that are designed to inform action? How sound is my evaluation of that evidence?

--μλμ--
4 CONDUCTING THE IN-ACTION TESTING

Overview

Before reporting the findings of the in-action testing, it is necessary to record the processes I undertook to reach those findings. I had prepared a design for evaluating the efficacy of the professional development activity design, and I was there, as a practitioner, engaged in studying my own processes as much as attending to the impact of the design on others. As a practitioner I had both my previous inquiry techniques, developed as I applied a science-based formative education to a variety of changing professional responsibilities in-practice, and the focus of undertaking a prospective study of reflective research as conceived from my reading of Kressel’s work. I was trying to be conscious about what I was doing and thinking, and I was expecting to learn-by-doing as well as reporting on what I was finding as I was being conscious about what I was doing and thinking. This chapter documents what I did as I collected and processed data to produce the findings reported in Chapters 5-8.

4.1 Enacting the proposed evaluation design

Comparing the intentions with the actions for the proposed evaluation enunciated in Chapter 3 indicates that I can improve my inquiry processes in a number of ways. While I had intended a three-way assessment process for the implementation of the design with the participants, I had only developed the benchmark and progress questionnaires, and I omitted to explicitly schedule the group self-assessment and the group negotiation of an external assessment within the professional development activity program. Once the professional development activity was underway the cognitive tasks associated with the facilitation role – the delivery of the inputs, recording post-session observations, responding with micro-design for individual sessions – captured my available focal attention. Also, while I had intended engagement myself as a peer with a group undertaking inquiry into practice
improvement, finding one depended on there being one to find within the practical constraints operating, and that could not be guaranteed.

4.1.1 Benchmark and Progress Questionnaires

The developed questionnaires were applied. Although they provided some information, and presumably helped participants identify change arising from the professional development activity, the material was not particularly informative in terms of providing definitive information for my evaluation of the activity’s design effectiveness. Further, the way the implementation of the design developed in the two groups meant that equivalent times for the conduct of the progress questionnaires for both groups did not eventuate, limiting the capacity to meaningfully compare results (see details at Chapter 5.2.4 and 5.3.4).

As I evaluated the questionnaire as a tool to evaluate change, I concluded that my questionnaire design was singularly limited in that:

- Not all the dimensions where change was anticipated, or looked for, were effectively addressed in the questionnaire
- The language used was not precise, and I made no attempt to develop precision of terminology and so bound the responses to a common concept – assuming that any definition actually does achieve such precision, as distinct from purporting to manage ambiguity of language
- The boundaries of the concepts addressed were confused
- The results were limited – only changes in numbers of ranking and changes in ranking on a scale were recorded
- While those changes appeared to be straightforward, ‘reverse’ results raised ambiguity, and provided no explanatory text, and the ‘anonymity’ of the process prevented using the material to explore explanation (note how rigorous research techniques contradict the process of exploring human interactions, and human change processes – Argyris’ argument (Argyris et al., 1985, p.x) in the Preface)

Consequently, the information gathered from the questionnaire process was limited. Any information that could be derived from the questionnaire analysis was valuable
only when it was able to be viewed in conjunction with other evidence, and thereby provide ancillary support to the findings developed from the analysis of other data.

4.1.2 Group determination of group process assessment

The group determination of how to assess the group process was not explicitly developed for a variety of reasons. Both groups did express an interest in the effectiveness of the group (see details at Chapter 5.2.6 and Chapter 6.3). However, I did not provide an occasion, early in the schedule of the design activities, for the groups to work on any group enunciation of either the benchmark of the group performance, or the criteria for evaluating change which they considered would be appropriate for the professional development activity. Such an omission could be readily remedied by adding this component to the distributed design schedule. In the absence of a benchmark description or nominated evaluative criteria, the evaluation was limited to the relatively informal application of the participants’ evaluative criteria, and how they chose to express those evaluations, individually, rather than in a group negotiated evaluation.

4.1.3 Group negotiation of the external assessment of improvement of practice

Again, work on developing a group agreement of how an external assessment of practice improvement might be conducted was not progressed or established as a formal part of the professional development activity. Again, that oversight could be readily remedied by adding this component to the distributed design schedule. Despite this oversight, one instance of being prepared to be subject to external assessment occurred. As a result of their sense of success with the work on negotiation, the participants of the ABE group prepared to share their results with others in the TAFE structure (see details at Chapter 5.2.7 and Chapter 6.6.2). Opening themselves to such an external assessment, even though an informal response to the professional development activity outcomes, rather than an intentional activity structured into the design, was an indication of their sense of success and confidence.

4.1.4 My search for a peer group, for myself

I was not completely successful in finding a peer group where I could test my capacity to engage as a peer. As noted, the existence of such a group was not entirely under my
control. My acknowledged dilemma still stands: if self-awareness needs to be developed and shared, to compound other-awareness and build openness to vulnerability in the group reflective work, and if, as a participant, I have ‘expertise’ in developing self-awareness on certain dimensions, then I will need to step out of the peer role for a time, and I will also need to be able to step back into a peer participant role once that work is done. Consequently, I still do not have experiential knowledge of that role change in that context: whether I can do it, or how, or what is involved. The literature appears to indicate that formal cooperative inquiry is a relatively recent development in mode of inquiry within the field (Heron & Reason, 2001), suggesting that this shift in roles is not necessarily as straightforward as literature descriptions might imply.

### 4.1.5 The window of opportunity

As noted in Chapter 3.4.3, beyond the designed evaluation process, I was there, as a practitioner, applying reflective work to my own practices, including the practice of inquiry, seeking to learn from my experience. Within that frame, I collected what data I was attentive to; I processed the available data; I wrote up my findings (see Chapters 5-8). In the following sections I look, in detail, at these components of my inquiry actions.

### 4.2 Data gathering process

The data gathered during the implementation of the professional development activity were textual data. It was written material, or oral material transformed into written text. The written material included: participants’ benchmark and progress questionnaire responses, participants’ written end-of-session reflections, my researcher-observer post-session observations and written reflections, my facilitator pre-session written preparations, artefacts generated jointly in-session and participants’ out-of-session written communications. The oral material included audio tape recordings of interviews and one group session, which was then transcribed into the written form.

Data are transformed into evidence as they are mobilised to provide support for an argument (Whitehead, 2004). The evidence is available in a number of forms. Some forms are more ‘direct’, and more independent of me, and my practice, than others.
For the participants other than myself, the evidential forms, in order of directness, from the most direct to least direct, vis-a-vis representing the participants’ views, are:

- the participants’ written end-of-session remarks (designated as ‘reflections’ during the project)
- some participant generated documents, artefacts of participant activity
- audio records and transcripts of interviews (for the participants of one group only)
- audio records and transcripts of one group session for one group
- researcher records of dialogue for three sessions (for one group only)
- responses to structured questionnaires – the benchmark, and the progress evaluation questionnaires
- researcher records of group discussions at the time – board summaries of and for the group work
- researcher generated session observations, recorded post session

For my self-study, the evidence is in the form of session preparation records; session observations and reflective work, recorded post session; my inputs as recorded in the audio records and transcripts of interviews and group sessions; diary entries; and other documents and artefacts associated with the process in the context of my studies and life interactions.

The following table indicates these sources, and how they are identified in the referencing of sources as the findings are reported.
Table 4-1: Inquiry data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A – ABE Group:</th>
<th>GROUP B – CNHS Group:</th>
<th>Researcher Self-Study:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Researcher Observations (EDOR:11-19, 21-27, 31-41)</td>
<td>• Researcher Observations (HDOR:01–17)</td>
<td>• Session Preparation Notes (EPSP; HPSP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Benchmark Questionnaire</td>
<td>• Benchmark Questionnaire</td>
<td>• Session Preparation Artefacts (described)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• MBTI Form</td>
<td>• MBTI Form</td>
<td>• Thinking captured in the session records: pre-, in-, out, post-session (EDOR:11-41; HDOR:01-17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Progress Evaluation Questionnaire</td>
<td>• Progress Evaluation Questionnaire</td>
<td>• Diary Notes (DN-date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Session artefacts – boardwork summaries of discussions in the group (EB:1-5); written material participants brought to the sessions (ESD:1-6.8); email communications about the project logistics and scope (EEM:1-3)</td>
<td>• Session artefacts – boardwork summaries of discussions in the group (HB:1-6); written material participants brought to the sessions (HSD:1)</td>
<td>• Other Pencil Notes (PN-date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participants’ End-of-Session ‘reflections’/ ‘reactions’/ ‘evaluations’ (EPR:0-302)</td>
<td>• Participants’ End-of-Session ‘reflections’/ ‘reactions’/ ‘evaluations’ (HPR:01–13)</td>
<td>• Supervision Reflection Notes (ROS-date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observed Dialogue recorded (3 sessions’ limited ie not verbatim) (EGDIAL:01–03)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• General Life Reflection Notes (GLR-date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interviews Transcripts (EINT:11–334)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading Notes - transcriptions and interactions (RN-Text-date if available)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One recorded Session Transcript (EGRP)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing Notes - drafting and reflective notes (TDW-date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Data processing analytical and evaluative notes (CODE-date)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Other Incident notes (CODE-date)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Data analysis process

The data analysis was by a thematic study of the texts in their context. One criterion of ‘theme’ was associated with recurrence. The identification of themes, other than by recurrence, demonstrates my categories and the way I converge material around those categories, and how I make boundaries for distinctions between categories. Part of my process was instructed by the action design, and part emerged as the professional development activity was conducted.

---

In identifying the sources of data the following coding was adopted:

- E referred to ABE participants; H referred to CNHS participants
- DOR referred to my Design Observations and Reflections
- PR referred to the Participants’ written end-of-session Reflections
- INT referred to transcribed Interviews; GRP referred to transcribed Group Interactions; GDIAL referred to Group Dialogue notes made of participants’ interactions during the session
- B referred to brainstorming captured as Boardwork; SD to written documentation brought by the participants to sessions; EM to email transactions
- PSP referred to my Project (Professional Development Activity) Session Preparations
- My associated personal records were DN- Diary Notes; PN- Pencil Notes of working with thinking; RN- Reading Notes; TDW- Writing Notes; ROS- Reflections and Observations of Supervision; GLR- General Life Reflection notes
One set of categories was established by the evaluation design process described in Chapter 3, and focused on indicators of change in self-awareness, other-awareness, group processes, reflective work, thinking and challenging thinking, and action learning. Another set of categories was determined by the groups when setting their objectives for the professional development activity. Other categories emerged as participants responded to the design, and as I was involved in meaning making in my lived experience.

The material studied included:

- interactions in the group sessions
- records of preparations and observations of session enactments
- participants’ benchmark and progress questionnaires response
- participants’ end-of-session remarks of an evaluative nature, concerning the session and its inputs and outcomes for them as individuals. (These remarks were considered private to me and them, in-practice. Permission has been received to use these remarks in the program evaluation, since they were far more informative than the benchmark and progress structured questionnaire data.)
- post-session records of my thinking and evaluations

In my in-action testing I used each of these different data sources for a variety of purposes.

The interactions in the group sessions were studied for material that:

- indicated progress towards, or away from, the overall objective of the process (especially Chapter 5)
- related to the various components of the design, indicating development, or lack of development, toward change on the identified dimensions (especially Chapter 6)
- grouped thematically on categories different to those included in the ‘overall objective’ and the ‘various components of the design’, and which could be indicators of other significant aspects of improving practice (Chapter 8)
The comparison between records of preparations and recorded observations of events, and the records of my thinking about them, between sessions and between groups, was conducted for the purposes of evaluating the professional development activity, as an enacted activity, in the two illustrative cases, and in their contexts. The focus was on the identified elements of the design: its inputs, its implementation in time and context, the impact of the intentional and the unintentional, and included taking into account the role, in-practice, of the facilitator (Chapter 7).

The participants’ benchmark and progress questionnaires and end-of-session remarks were analysed for indications of development, or not, on a particular dimension being observed, in accordance with the design argument (Chapter 6). As ‘in their own words’ data, the end-of-session remarks were also available and used to contribute to the sense of reliability of my post-session observations. As evaluative data, about the sessions, from the participants’ point of view, the end-of-session remarks were also used to inform me about desirable inputs for following sessions, with the group.

I compared the two illustrative cases with my own experience, for indications of issues where my internal view might illuminate the situation observed in the case of others, and where the information from the case of others might challenge my thinking about my experience (especially Chapter 7 and Chapter 8).

For the ABE group audio-tape recordings of interviews and of the interactions in one group session constituted another source of data. The interview data were used to track the action learning, but also provided ‘in their own words’ rich detail to flesh out and provide a check for the comparative observations and understanding developed in my post-session records. The recorded group session focused on the participants’ reflections on confidence, a theme that recurred in the first round of interviews. The group session transcript data also provided ‘in their own words’ material and it was now recorded in their group context. The detail available from such a record was also particularly useful for comparative checking with observations and understanding developed in my in- and post-session records of participant interchanges.
4.4 Story construction process

The first approach to the interpretation of the evidence to build an argument was primarily one of compare and contrast. For me, progress with such comparison moved from the general, to more detail, then back to the general in the form of a converged summary. First priority, in weighting evidence in a comparison, was given to the self-assessment of the participants. The level of inference from the data needed to be as direct as possible (Argyris, 1993, p.57).

The second level of interpretation came from my further work with the evidence, where I looked for patterns and possible meanings. One criterion of interpretation related to coherence (Schön, 1991, p.348), and represented my meaning-making: what material was perceived to fit with other material, and in a meaningful way, compared with what stood out to me as ‘surprise’ (Dewey, 1933, p.12, Dewey uses ‘perplexity’, ‘doubt’, ‘unexpected’). The nature of the map formed of the territory was quite complex, since many strands of information were taken to have meaning and value for understanding the professional development activity design and its operation in context. The following diagram – Mind Map for Research – June-July, 2000, revised in 2002 to capture the ‘action learning’ element – presents my first summary map of the territory.
Figure 4-1 Mind Map for Research June-July 2000, revised 2002

© Dianne Allen, 2002
The processing also included my lived experience, and the meaning I was making as I lived the design enactment with the two groups. The record of that meaning making was conveyed, in the first instance, in the primary post-sessional observational records which were mostly word processed. On occasions I tried using handwritten mindmapping notes for the first, quickest capture, followed by the more structured, slower typing. When I found that the two-step process tended to result in re-expressing the record, I moved to direct word processing, unless circumstances made that impossible. I then transferred the key primary data of the session observations, the participants’ end-of-session reflections, the session dialogue notes and the audio records transcribed, into a NUD.IST database, though with minimal coding, and I used the NUD.IST searching capacities on the text rather than coded categories. The NUD.IST form gave me reference coding to a block of data, usually a sentence of the written records.

After the lived experience, the next stage of intensive processing involved revisiting the primary data and developing indexes and summary tables from the data. After the active revisiting of the primary data, and building up the summary tables, I wrote the text of the findings chapters, expressing what I understood to be the situation: the story (Schön, 1991, pp.344-6). Then I referenced my written draft back to the data. While referencing the draft, the information from the data required me to amend the written construction from time to time, to express it in a way that, in my view, more fairly represented the data. In undertaking such an amendment I was using my tacit evaluative criteria which others have described as being unusually or unbelievably objective.

4.5 Which cut of the possible stories?

In the written construction of my findings report, the first task was descriptive: to give a picture of the groups in their context, to give some idea of what was being worked with, and to what end. The bulk of the descriptive task was accomplished by the presentation of the case study details (Chapter 5.2-5.3).
The second task was more analytic and interpretive: What did I understand the evidence to be conveying to me? Here, any number of cuts, or uses of focal differentiation, what Schön calls ‘framing’ (Schön, 1983, pp.130-1), could be used to process the data.

As a first report, I selected a relatively straightforward focus, in the interests of indicating the potential or otherwise, of the professional development activity to be relevant to the practitioner field, thereby expressing the extent to which I value the practical, the practice, and the contribution, if any, of this inquiry to the practitioner in a professional development field. Within the professional development practice focus three distinct views have been taken:

- The participants’ expressed professional development interests, and the extent to which the professional development activity was seen to have contributed to addressing those interests, both at the group and the individual level, and using the participants’ own evaluative criteria (Chapter 5.2.6-7, and Chapter 5.3.6-7).
- The designed intention of the professional development activity, and its enactment and outcomes in the two instances where the professional development activity was conducted with a view to investigating its efficacy. Chapter 6 reports the experience of the participants for the various dimensions being sought to be developed. A further round of reporting indicates how the enactment operated in the course of time, in the context (Chapter 7.1); how and when the inputs were used (Chapter 7.2 and Chapter 7.3). Facilitation is explored at two levels: facilitating the design and evaluating the design as a professional development activity (Chapter 7.1-7.3), and considering facilitator capacity and potential to improve performance with its facilitation (Chapter 7.3 and 7.4).
- The additional in-practice outcomes that emerged (Chapter 8).

The material that represents my self-study is found throughout Chapters 4-8, and especially at Chapter 6.7 (self-study on the design dimensions), Chapter 7.3.4 (my professional development objective associated with learning-by-doing for reflective work); Chapter 7.4 (my second professional development objective associated with learning-by-doing for facilitation). The unintentional learning associated with my engagement in the process included my learning about my inquiry processes (Chapter 4,
especially Chapter 4.1 and 4.8), and included an unexpected insight reported in Chapter 8.6.

The third task, the critical, involved me reconsidering my understandings, and especially in relation to the conceptual framework that I was working with, in the light of the findings. The first level of the critical is presented in the convergences and implications discussion associated with this chapter and Chapters 5-8. The further critical review of the implications of the inquiry is dealt with in Chapter 9.

In presenting the descriptive, together with the more analytic and interpretive, with some critiquing, it should be noted that it is my understanding that the language used in presenting the ‘descriptive’, in that it is representative of my vocabulary, and choices made in the range of that vocabulary, indicates something of my ontology – the categories available to me (Schön, 1991, p.349) and the categories that I have chosen to use in this instance. That is to say, I understand ‘descriptive’ to also include an aspect of ‘analytic’, ‘interpretive’ and ‘critical’, and while often implicit and tacit to the writer, can be read for its analytic, interpretive and critical assumptions by another. By the same token, the reading of the language, by others, also exposes their ontology – what the categories convey to them, and their sometimes implicit and tacit assumptions.

Apart from my during-process reflective notes, and these reported findings, I generated a number of intermediate artefacts including: a chronology of events and activity; tables of the indexing process, representing the categorising, noted above; tables conveying collateral comparisons of categories; a description and critical review of how I was dealing with the main categories of data: the benchmark and progress questionnaire data, the participants’ end-of-session remarks, the observations of the participants’ in-session-interactions, and the additional data resources and participants’ audio records (ABE only); diagrammatic representations of text and interrelationships.

The task of reporting on the findings, in a way that was coherent and accessible to the reader required a number of steps. Selecting what to focus on, and ordering on a thematic basis rather the chronology of the experience, involved summarising, and summarising again, and with each cycle leaving aside some of that informing detail. A
risk of such a process is that an oversimplified impression is given of the nature of inquiry, in-practice, and the phenomenon explored by such inquiry: practice.

4.6 Limitations

Each of the sources of data for this inquiry has its value and its limitations. One of the processes in inquiry technique, especially for naturalistic inquiry, is to use multiple sources in an endeavour to ameliorate the impact of such limitations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this inquiry, I was able to tap a limited range of multiple sources. Developing the collaborative or cooperative aspect of the inquiry approach is needed to extend that range.

Inquiry is inevitably constrained by natural limitations in data gathering, and other resource limitations. For in-practice inquiry these constraints are even more acute. One of the purposes, in the collaborative or cooperative aspect of the group becoming the vehicle of reflection, is the potential to tap multiple experiences of similar phenomena, in an endeavour to reach beyond such limitations of in-practice inquiry. As the inquiry progressed, the significance of the collaborative or cooperative group approach became more apparent. I would anticipate developing that more, in future applications of my design. For this inquiry, my inability to mobilise the collaborative or cooperative aspect and tap its full potential, significantly constrained the findings, and for some areas, meant that I needed to rely on understandings developed from the literature and my self-study material (see section 4.1 above).

Inquiry is also limited by the capacities of the method as well as by the capacities of the practitioner using the method. In a naturalistic inquiry approach, with a more collaborative or cooperative engagement of participants, and multiple cycles, more than one particular approach and one particular practitioner’s capacities are available to investigate the identified issues that are confirmed as still being issues needing to be investigated (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Heron, 1992, 1996a, 1996c; Ravetz, 1987). The timeframe set for this inquiry limited any potential use of a fuller collaborative or cooperative approach. The self-study indicated more clearly the nature of my capabilities and where they constrained the capacity to develop the findings.
Be that as it may, as a practitioner, I need to recognise the practice situation that I find myself in and I need to develop processes to deal with those constraints. Also, as a practitioner, it is the value that I give the material in the questionnaires, the end-of-session remarks, the in-session-interactions, the artefacts, the transcripts of the audio records of interviews and session interactions, that contributes to my judgement about the effectiveness or otherwise of my professional development activity. It is my interpretation that contributes to my use of the design in my practice. Inquiry, in-practice, is inquiry for the practitioner’s use. My capacity to recognise these limitations, and my role in valuing, as well as evaluating, that data, determines the quality of my practice, as an inquirer. The quality of my practice as an inquirer inevitably impacts on my practice as the particular kind of practitioner I claim to be (be it teacher, facilitator, manager, dispute resolver, counsellor, lesson-designer, communicator, …). It is in my interests to seek to improve the practice of my inquiry by being able to recognise, and effectively deal with these limitations (Heron, 1996c).

In this case, I was endeavouring to deal with those constraints by taking a more intentional reflective approach to my inquiry practice. From that work, I have a number of observations to report about what I have learned-by-doing as I have reflected on how I have conducted the in-action testing.

4.7 Reflections on the processing-to-report phase of my inquiry

4.7.1 Process of comparison

One of the issues of interpretation of the data related to my processes of comparison – what can be compared easily and what cannot; and how ordering material for one sort of comparison hides another possible comparison, and how then the selection of which comparison to make impacts on the quality of the findings. I identified some comparisons to be more valid than others, and the basis on which I was making that judgement, was clearer.
4.7.2 Interrelatedness of data categories

I noticed a significant level of interrelatedness between categories I was trying to keep separate. While interrelatedness was my understanding from early days (it is part of the complexity that practitioners try to deal with in practice), the process of trying to evaluate and to explicate the evaluation via these findings, highlighted just how interactive and interdependent the design was. I had tried to separate, and identify, if not measure, change in key dimensions understood to be operating in the process. But I had also designated what I was trying to deal with as a ‘thinking-action complex’.

Revisiting the structured questionnaire design, and considering how little it was able to contribute to the evaluation of the process, and revisiting the categorising given to the natural expression of participants’ responses in and to sessions, simply confirmed, in a somewhat negative way, the non-sense of trying to separate the interrelated. And yet, in-practice, the complex that practitioners are required to deal with involves such interrelationship. If this inquiry has no other merit, it has highlighted to me just how difficult it is to deal with such complexity when relying, predominantly, on an analytical approach. It begs the question of what practitioners are doing ‘naturally’ – that is, what is embedded and overlooked – and how; and illustrates that what practitioner-researchers are doing, in something like the reporting process recorded here, is working on the map of the territory (Argyris, 1993, pp.9, 65).

4.7.3 Multiple learning sites and levels of access to learning

Another issue, related to the conduct of inquiry in this practice instance, was the multiplicity of sites and levels of possible learning and change within each site, and how accessible each of these sites and levels was, to observation, or self-assessment and self-reporting.

As indicated in the diagram seeking to analyse the professional development activity design, Figure 4-1, the design was operating at a number of different sites. At each site, learning could operate at one or more levels of learning (Bateson, 1972). Any evaluation of the designed professional development activity needed to cover as many of these sites and levels as possible. Some of these sites and some of these levels were more accessible than others.
Any self-reporting was important as indicating something happening at one or more of those sites or levels within a site. The self-assessment, at an individual level, or within the group, also provided important information about the effectiveness or otherwise of the enacted design. When internal information was available as ‘open’ material, as per the Johari model (Luft, 1984), it was available for the group, and for the group’s ongoing operations (see Glossary for details). The researcher-participant observations captured some of the ‘open’ material – that which the researcher-participant was attending to, and was able to attend to. A match between self-reporting material and recorded participant comments in-session indicated stronger evidence of open material relating to the design. One of the things the design did do (or should or might do) was provide a common language for describing these experiences.

Using the Johari model further, to explore the use of the data collected, it should be noted that some of the researcher-participant observations were of ‘blind’ material – of both the group and the individuals in the group, (excepting, however, the blind material of the researcher!). Here I would expect less of a match between the observations of the researcher and the self-reporting of the participants. It should be noted, however, that Luft comments that we can ‘flooge’, or be involved in ‘immanent’ inconsistencies, where we self-report in apparent contradictions (Luft, 1984, pp.81-82). We actually know an aspect of ourselves and our responses in some sort of way, but do not accept it, or explicitly recognise it, as part of our expressible self-knowledge. Such unawareness, if captured, could provide an indicator of faulty thinking or the possibility of a mismatch between espoused theory and theory-in-use, and be a point of leverage for possible practice improvement.

4.7.4 Data analysis and story construction process

As I reflected on the data analysis and story construction process I undertook, I noticed how I ‘felt’ about the evidence I had, and what I was able to draw from it, and how I was comparing that to the material I was working with in the literature. The evidential argument from the in-action testing data ‘felt’ a bit ‘thin’ by comparison. For some of the aspects of learning to change that I was hoping to explore, I found I could not recognise instances from the implementation of the design with the participants that yielded empirical data to work with. For these aspects I was limited to my self-study, and the findings of others as reported in the literature.
I also realised that my evidential argument was more a network of tenuous threads than obvious, one-to-one, cause-and-effect matches. The strength of the argument comes from the network, the inter-relatedness of the triangulated information, and perhaps the sense of coherence that is formed in my meaning-making from multiple sources. When called upon to explain a decision to act, I find that, as a practitioner, I draw on more and more of that network detail, or contextual material. It is from the contextual detail that I look to identify what is informing my understanding of my decision and action in a particular instance. And I tend to privilege that data and evidential argument: indications from the experience which challenged the literature would be honoured. Such a finding would spark off another round of inquiry involving perhaps the identification and clarification of a different set of issues needing investigation.

4.7.5 Post-practice processing compared to in-practice processing

Since I was trying to test the practicality of the reflective research approach to improving practice, I was also sensitive to the discrepancy between the post-session processing that was required for this report, and to what extent that no longer represented in-practice processing conditions. The level of post-project processing that I have conducted was far more than ‘usual, in-practice processes’, and was directed toward the standards of research reporting, rather than in-practice operation.

What I have done, and how long it has taken me, tends to discount these processes as a ‘practical’ aspect of normal in-practice operation. In-practice, life goes on. The merit of the continuity of activity and instances, for inquiry in-practice, is that such continuity yields access to more and more experiential instances which may act to keep on revising the practitioner’s working hypotheses. Where that continuity allows for ongoing relationships, then part of the ongoing relationship is what can be called ‘member checking’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1989): where an interpretation I give to another’s utterances can be confirmed or disconfirmed when additional data suggest that I have misunderstood an earlier response, and am working with faulty expectations derived from such a misunderstanding. Asking questions about the interaction, and clarifying understandings, is part of ongoing, in-practice, gathering of valid information (Argyris, 1993). But it also means that a product like this report is, and can only be, a construct
of a slice of time. In that respect it is not necessarily truth-telling to the experience of practice, and inquiry in-practice. Oversimplification, mentioned earlier, is risked in another way.

### 4.7.6 Issues of presentation of findings

One of the issues in the presentation of a report of findings for an inquiry of this kind relates to how to deal with the quantity of material and how, in that quantity, to give the participants and others, their voice and balance in representation, which is a particularly important issue when trying to hold on to direct inferences and to deal knowingly with less direct attributions (Argyris, 1993, p.57). In the presentation of the findings in Chapters 5-8, I have reproduced the participants’ voices, when available and when I judged the reproduction to convey relevant material.

As noted previously, I worked with the material in a number of ways. I used tables to gather summaries and set out material in a compare and contrast form. I used storytelling (Schön, 1991, pp.344-6) to try and build a readable picture of what has happened, as well as how I understood that. At times the one-page diagram has been an essential part of my attempt to hold the detail together, and in a ‘big picture’.

As noted, in building my story I referenced my construction to the original data. I personally found that as I developed this kind of material, I preferred to be able to see the associated referencing then and there, since the referencing, of itself, conveyed meaning to me. However, beyond an impression of quantity, such detailed referencing back to the data can be relatively impenetrable for the reader, and in the interests of readability, or communicative effectiveness, much of the referencing has been omitted from this presentation. Similarly, intermediate working tables and diagrams, which can be relatively impenetrable to the reader, have been excised from the text.
4.7.7 Mapping the territory

As I considered the nature of comparing, and finding interactivity of data categories, the nature of the limitations involved, the analysis and story construction process, both in-session and post-session, by myself and the participants, and multiple sites and levels being addressed in the process, I appreciated why ‘map-making’ is a useful metaphor for the activity (Argyris, 1993, pp.9, 65). Another metaphor that came to my mind, over the period, was the Bayeaux tapestry: multiple threads, with multiple colours, and multiple needleworkers, and what protocols and mechanisms were needed to maintain sufficient consistency over such a large work, and such a long time, for it to be recognised as a singular work.

In working on the map of the territory first the major features are identified, but out of scale (proportion) with the whole picture. Then more detail is attended to. Then a rule is applied, a scale is introduced, measures against a standard are made. The map becomes more refined, more accurate, providing that the map-makers continue to operate within the rule applied. Latterly, technological processes have progressed to aerial photographs and computer-generated and enhanced three-dimensional representations. But it is not the same as being there. But without the map, being there may also be the experience of being lost. Without a map, it is difficult to provide good directions for others to join me, whether I am lost or not.

4.7.8 Learning-by-doing

From the experience of this inquiry, and reflecting on previous practice, I would describe my approach to learning-by-doing as follows:

- Round one: doing and observing, observing as much as possible, and trying to do what appears to need to be done
- Round two: describing the doing – if possible working at something like procedures documentation
- Round three: doing it again – using the procedural documentation, and now identifying where the doing, to be effective, is different from the procedure documentation, capturing gaps, elaborating on aspects of subtlety that need to be recognised and accommodated or responded to
Contributing to Learning to Change

- Round four: describing the enhanced understanding of the doing
- Round five: considering how else it might be done – considering what is the purpose of a certain activity, considering how effectively that is achieved, and considering what other activity might achieve that same purpose (assuming the purpose is still acceptable)
- Round six: doing it again, and confirming the enhanced description’s accuracy and comprehensiveness, and trialling any changes suggested from round five
- Round three and six options: showing someone else how to do it, and using the documented records, with their process structuring, to help do that, and to test the effectiveness of those records and that structuring for such demonstration and teaching

In the past, I would have justified rounds two-four as preparations for training others to do it (round three and six). In rounds 3, and 6, the doing it, and doing it again, was part of my evaluative process – doing it demonstrated to me that I did know and understand ‘it’ enough to do it without mistake, without hesitation, at a level where if a problem occurred, then I had some ideas or could develop some ideas about how to solve it. Until all of these items were in place, then I tended to (1) forget all too quickly, or (2) doubt that the learning had been effective.

In rounds 3, and 6, doing it again, and in the context of confirming the documentation, allowed me to attend to more understanding of the task – I could begin to attend to the next layer of implications beyond the superficial. I would begin to recognise that a next layer existed, as well as find out what was in that layer, and how what was in that layer contributed to what could be seen, the superficial, and to the apparently effortless performance demonstrated by the competent.

4.7.9 Reflections on the reflections

A number of the observations above can be found in any text on qualitative inquiry methods and techniques. One of the purposes of enunciating the above was to record and recognise my thinking as I was doing. If what I was doing had elements which were different from recognised qualitative inquiry methods and techniques, then such a record would be a first step in identifying and evaluating those differences. If a
difference was related to something innovative in the concept of reflective research of practice, then that innovation could be recognised and evaluated. Sometimes questioning a novice’s practice can illuminate what might have become embedded in others’ practice as their competency developed (Kressel, 1997) and allow the embedded activity to be re-assessed. Whether I can, or could recognise such difference, to evaluate it, is another matter.

What these observations illustrate to me is the extent to which, in my practice, I value the learning that comes from doing. Documented text needs to be enacted to become knowledge for me, to demonstrate its match with reality for me. My practice operates on some of the criteria of actionable knowledge raised by Argyris (Argyris, 1993). Further, the nature of my learning-by-doing includes an embedded iterative cycling process, underlining, perhaps, why I have responded so positively to Kressel’s concept.

Summary

The description of the inquiry method sets the scene for reporting the findings. The description indicates what was done and how that contributed to the development of the findings reported in Chapters 5-8, and to what extent the claims able to be generated from those findings might be limited, and by the inquiry technique.

Since part of the inquiry method involved learning-by-doing, and part of the process included self-study, or the inquirer inquiring, the descriptive material here also became the data for an evaluation of the inquiry method. The first level of that evaluation was addressed by noting my reflections on the processes involved in the inquiry. A second level of evaluation will be undertaken when I reconsider the process of reflective research of practice, and my understanding of it, in Chapter 9.

---μλμ---
Overview

The second strand of testing the efficacy of my professional development activity design was the in-action, move-testing, process. In this, and the next three chapters, I report on the implementation, the outcomes, the evaluation and the implications of the in-action testing. The first view of the activity is taken from the participants’ perspective: Did it work for them, for their practice concerns?

5.1 Design in-action for groups of professionals

Two groups were convened, allowing the conduct of the professional development activity to proceed. Two other formal contacts to arrange such an opportunity did not reach the same point. In all four cases, in making the formal approach for access and entry, I was working with a prior acquaintance, and one who had some knowledge of my professional interests. In one situation the decision to not proceed was mine and arose because conditions I considered important to establish – namely the organisational support necessary to release participants to the activity in normal work time – could not be met. In the second situation the decision to not proceed lay with the supervisor who considered the logistics insurmountable.

The formation of a group in which to conduct the professional development activity constituted the first change for the participants in the activity. That change was accomplished outside of the specific inputs of the professional development activity, apart from the sharing of the basics of the design, in principle, and negotiating the particular action learning objectives that the groups would be pursuing during the professional development activity. That change can be considered to indicate the openness of the participants to change, at some level.
From the implementation of the professional development activity among the two groups that did form, two illustrative case studies can be sketched.

5.2 Case 1 – Adult Basic Education Teachers Group

5.2.1 Overview

The first group of professional practitioners undertaking the professional development activity was of five teachers of Adult Basic Education (ABE group) based at a medium sized Technical and Further Education (TAFE) campus in an outer urban area. The nominated 40 hour engagement with them, in group sessions and in individual or team interviews, occurred between October 1999 and October 2000, and was conducted on the TAFE premises, in work hours, for most instances. Four individual interviews were conducted offsite and at the participants’ preferred time and location. Access was negotiated in the context of an ongoing personal relationship that I had with the Senior Head Teacher and which had involved following through on occasional discussions of mutual professional concerns. The group was of self-selecting volunteers, with points during the process for the participants to review ongoing participation. The element of negotiating continuing with the process, and what the focus of the group was to be, was formally discussed in the without-prejudice session at the beginning, at the end of Phase 1, and at the end of Phase 2.

5.2.2 Participants

The five female participants were experienced teachers whose service in the field ranged from 12 to 25 years, and in the current role from 2 to 14 years. All participants had experience of more than one employer, though all had been with their current employer in excess of five years. One participant experienced a formal change in her role during the period of the research project. Ages ranged from just turning forty, to fifty five, and one participant was planning imminent retirement.

Their individual areas of activity covered the Access courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), the Statement of Attainment and Certificate level studies for Adult Foundation Education (S.A.A.F.E. and C.A.F.E. respectively). All had more than five years experience in adult basic education roles, and additional experience of
other training roles in primary or secondary education or adult vocational training. The individual participants represented the core staff providing the elementary levels of Access courses at the campus and were supplemented by a number of part-time and casual staff, depending on the numbers of students enrolled.

The application of the MBTI indicated three participants had an ENFP personality type, though there were differences within each of the four dimensions of that pattern, while the others scored as ENTJ and ISFP personality types (see Glossary for a brief explanation of these codes). The scoring of the other self-assessment and awareness tools indicated differences between the participants.

5.2.3 Professional context

TAFE, in common with other State Government instrumentalities, was experiencing a shift in its ethos and a winding down of the publicly funded resources at its disposal. The winds of ‘commercialisation’ and ‘strategic positioning’ were blowing through its infrastructure. New permanent positions, whether fulltime or part-time, were hard to come by. The need to engage in marketing to increase the services provided by the TAFE staff became an important incentive for participants to increase their skills.

Adult Basic Education was a relatively ‘new’ section of TAFE activities, and had been supported by special funding, as part of labour market programs. These resources were beginning to contract. Adult Basic Education (ABE) was a subsection of ‘Access’. The Access educational programs sought to deal with students experiencing barriers to education due to cultural or language differences, poor health or isolation, or incomplete schooling. The entrance program for English language speakers was S.A.A.F.E – Level 1. The S.A.A.F.E was an 18 week course of 18 hours per week, covering literacy and numeracy skills, confidence, self-esteem and learning skills. It was a pre-requisite for entry to C.A.F.E or other TAFE vocational courses. It was offered in two stages. Similarly, C.A.F.E was an 18 week course of 18 hours per week, covering literacy and numeracy skills, confidence, self-esteem and learning skills. It was a pre-requisite for entry to the General Education Certificate (the equivalent of the Year 10 School Certificate), or other TAFE vocational courses. The Access ESOL program was a one year course of 20 hours per week, for adults wishing to learn basic English and unable
to access the Adult Migrant Education Services courses, and a certificate level course was available on successful completion of the Access course.

In addition, the staff provided tutoring in basic English language, numeracy, and computer literacy, offered as an ‘individual’ service, available to any students of other TAFE studies who needed this kind of assistance for their other studies. Students could self-refer, or be referred by their other course teachers, to access this assistance. Special study sessions can be scheduled, including individual arrangements by appointment.

The student profile, using these courses, ranged from 15-year-olds who had left the school system for a variety of reasons, through to senior adults dealing with change in life circumstances (e.g., recent death of a spouse).

Funds were available for Workplace English Language & Literacy (WELL) programs, mounted in external workplaces and jointly funded by the employer and the WELL funding agency. Funds were also available from DEETYA (Federal Government Department of Employment, Education Training and Youth Affairs) for Youth At Risk programs.

**5.2.4 Where, when and what aspects of the implementation**

The first ‘group’ engagement was the without-prejudice session, when I endeavoured to scope my reflective research of practice concept and indicate how I thought it could be applied in a professional development activity. It was held over a two-hour period on the afternoon of 18 October 1999, in a staff meeting room at the College campus. It was convened by the Senior Head Teacher (who did not attend) and five staff members attended the initial discussion. Three of these, and another who had not attended the session, agreed to participate in the program. The meeting was followed by email interactions with the Senior Head Teacher, to consider possible logistics options to allow the proposal to proceed. A second without-prejudice discussion was held on 1 November 1999, with the Senior Head Teacher and three other staff, to explore what might be an area of practice learning, other than teaching, where my approach could be applied. The Senior Head Teacher then became one of the participants. The second session was conducted in the ABE library area, and explored the ABE staff concerns.
with the thrust of commercialisation, and their experiences in trying to conduct negotiations with external parties to deliver external course programs. From those discussions, and further email interactions, it was agreed to focus the reflective work and action learning process on the issue of negotiation for the commercial activities. My preparatory self-awareness inputs were to be dealt with upfront. I arranged to distribute the MBTI form (see Glossary) and Benchmark Questionnaire (Appendix 3.4.1.2) and Ethics permission form (see Appendix 3.2.4B for the explanatory overview of the project and the discerned ethical issues appended to the permission form) to the participants during the following week, and they returned those to me, separately, by pre-paid post by 15 November 1999.

Phase 1 (Total of 16 hours) followed. It was conducted mostly in the ABE library area, and consisted of:

- two sessions of two hours (17 November 1999, 7 December 1999) covering the presentation and discussion of the self-awareness material
- one day of six hours (9 December 1999) focusing on understandings of negotiation, including a structured reflection on the participants’ experience of negotiation, an audit of knowledge resources available in the group related to negotiation, an assessment of current learning needs and undertaking a negotiation role play
- a half day of four hours (2 February 2000) undertaking a Harvard Negotiation Project structured analysis (see details in Chapter 5.2.7.1) of a current workplace negotiation scenario, and, after the analysis had been conducted, receiving a contemporaneous debriefing report from the participant engaged in the actual negotiation
- a two-hour afternoon session (10 February 2000) reviewing inputs, negotiations progress, and interactions from previous sessions and explanatory models (Johari window; Argyris and Schön’s Model I and Model II – see details in Glossary). The Progress Questionnaire (Appendix 3.4.1.3) was issued at this point and returned to me separately by pre-paid post.
Phase 2 (Total 10 hours) proceeded after a month’s break. It was conducted in the Individual Study Centre, and involved some five, two-hour afternoon sessions, over 6 weeks consisting of:

- review and development of application aspects of MBTI; another facilitation of a group analysis of a prospective workplace negotiation using the Harvard Negotiation Project seven elements grid for the structured analysis (9 March 2000)
- focus on stress: self awareness assessments and presentation of basic stress management strategies; MBTI input to stress considerations and strategies (16 March 2000)
- reviewing understandings of the negotiation process and its stress potential and considering alternative ways of framing negotiations (23 March 2000)
- reviewing progress to date with the professional development activity; engaging with a debriefing report of progress with current negotiations of course programs for external parties (6 April 2000) – with my role shifting towards more observation than input or issue and decision facilitation
- group consideration of current developments within various organisational contexts for further commercial and external course proposals; and progress with current negotiations (13 April 2000)

Phase 3 was not conducted primarily in the group session format. It did include two further two-hour group sessions, one in June 2000 and one in August 2000. The group session in June was convened for the group to look at how to share some of what they had been doing with other levels of the organisation. The second group session in August was convened to allow for a structured exploration of their understanding of what contributed to, or detracted from, confidence – a theme that had arisen during the sessions and which recurred in the first round of interviews. The bulk of the third phase was conducted through interview sessions, which allowed for more in-depth enunciation and review of the action learning projects, which differed for the different participants. These were held in three rounds. The first round, in late April 2000, focused on defining the participants’ own action learning projects associated with negotiations with external parties: its scope, objectives and how they would evaluate success. The second round was held in July-August 2000 to reflect on progress to date.
The third round was conducted in October 2000 to review progress with the action learning project to that point, and reflect on the effectiveness of the professional development activity design in the light of the action learning project experience.

5.2.5 Group context

The ABE group was a natural group, with a history of interactions together, and the prospect of ongoing workplace transactions. In the year previous to the intervention, four of the five participants had gathered together occasionally to discuss common concerns, to plan section-wide events. These gatherings depended on each of them being free of classes at a common time. The fifth participant had a teaching program that meant she was not available for those discussions.

5.2.6 ABE Group objectives

For the group of Adult Basic Education teachers the changes occurring in their external context had brought them to the point where they had expressed a need to seek out a way of equipping themselves to engage in the marketing of their services. In the discussion of those concerns in the second without-prejudice session, the interactions identified that focusing on negotiation, to investigate the potential to improve current negotiating skills by action learning, would contribute to their marketing capacities. That provided an opening for the professional development activity design.

The Senior Head Teacher was also concerned to develop team effectiveness and expressed her interests in the professional development activity in these terms:

Well, the idea being that as a team we're going to pursue a commercial activity. To me I see it as important to our section survival. And within TAFE things are going to get much tighter and I want those teachers, because that's so important to me, to be able to survive in a much tighter climate, not to be squeezed out. ... And to me, setting it up so that they feel they can cope with it, we can go ahead and do things. The idea of being able to go out and market is very foreign to all of us. And we all say we all decided to be teachers. And that's the frightening thing that we have now got the responsibility of finding the fee paying work that will eventually be expected to make enough money to pay a salary. ... And although we can keep our head in the sand, I've seen too much happen in TAFE to know that we're not going to be allowed to do that for much longer.

(Round 1 Interview 24/4/2000)
5.2.7  **ABE Group outcomes**

5.2.7.1  **Focus on negotiation**

Specific inputs and structured analysis were introduced to focus on particular aspects of the task of negotiation, and six of the twelve group sessions were devoted to negotiation. In Phase 1, after the introduction of the basic self-awareness screens, I conducted a structured reflection and group brainstorm to unpack what the word ‘negotiation’ implied to the group, and what knowledge resources about negotiation were at their disposal. I challenged them to disclose what they felt they could not do in the face of their apparently extensive knowledge base. The personal elements of the barriers were then elucidated. The group was split into pairs to role play a negotiation scenario, and some reflections undertaken of the experience. The next available group session was after the six week Christmas New Year break, and at that I presented content input from the Harvard Negotiation Project, the seven elements analytical structure based on Fisher, Ury, & Patton, (1991). This tool seeks to systematically identify the issues of, and stakeholders to, a negotiation, and then considers:

1. **Interests** – the needs which motivate parties to negotiate – of the parties to the negotiation and other identified stakeholders
2. **Alternatives** – the actions that can be taken without the agreement of the other parties – and seeks to identify the BATNA (the best alternative to a negotiated agreement), of both parties
3. **Options** – all the possibilities on which a party might agree
4. **Standards** – Independent and objective criteria to benchmark decision making between options, or deciding on how what cannot be negotiated might be dealt with
5. **Commitment** – the oral and written understanding of what parties will or will not do
6. **Relationship** – the ability of the parties to manage their differences effectively
7. **Communication** – the exchange of thoughts, messages and information – questions to ask; information to give
I facilitated two instances of group brainstorming, using that analytical structure, to undertake preparations for pending negotiations (2 February and 9 March sessions). Three different pairs (involving four of the five individuals: EP1 and EP5; EP1 and EP4; EP2 and EP5) then engaged in joint preparations using the tool, prior to holding negotiations with external agencies.

The group interactions in the preparation stage were recognised as adding value. The inputs of other participants added to the information pool, and resulted in exchange of ideas. One participant commented that the analytical tool ‘brought out issues I had not thought about’ (EP2), while another recognised something in the process that challenged her to ‘seek wider options to be more prepared for what comes up … be more 'thinking' and 'lateral' ..’ (EP4). A number of participants noted how the analysis helped organise their thinking.

The participants reported more satisfaction with the resulting negotiating discussions than their prior perception of effectiveness in such discussions, and one participant indicated that she had used the tool in a personal life negotiation, and was more satisfied with the results.

One of the interesting linkages in the expressions of greater satisfaction was that of the relationship between preparation and confidence. One participant’s comment of ‘I felt a much better prepared person and confident?’ (EP5), even if qualified with the query mark, contained the linkage, while another’s ‘we've done our preparation and that got us ready and that gives you the confidence then to know that what you are going to say is making sense’ (EP1) expressed a similar sentiment. Later, in Chapter 8.3, the issue of confidence, and the participants’ understanding of confidence, will be addressed in more detail.

Exchanges in the 6 April group session captured the participants’ sense of change of understanding of what was going on in negotiation, and how they were now seeing it, and what they would need to do to keep learning. One participant noted that ‘we have gained in confidence; know that when try not a winner first up; time to build relationship’ and ‘We've come a long way’ and was seeing the process as one of ‘building on relationships … recognising that people we are dealing with are
sympathetic to it’ and where it was ‘no longer confrontation; both look to stand to benefit’ (EP1). A second participant expressed ‘the biggest thing was [becoming aware of] It's OK to have a go; To see it as talking to people, having a meeting’ and ‘seeing them as people and working it through to find an outcome that is cooperative’ (EP4). A third noted that part of the change was to ‘see that the journey is as important as the result - … if we don't get it we still have opened doors. They may not be interested now, but may be interested in six months time. It's part of what we are trying to do’ and also that ‘it's not so personal now’ … ‘important to know it's not personal … only like any other situation with a project, or service. It's one of the processes to make’ (EP3).

5.2.7.2  Focus on team effectiveness

Another objective for the professional development activity for the ABE group related to the Senior Head Teacher’s concern to develop team effectiveness. The ‘team’ had a number of forms. The group was the five when they were able to convene together. ‘Outreach pairs’ formed to engage in negotiations and discussions with external agencies. ‘Team teaching pairs’ delivered training modules to groups of learners, within the TAFE campus, and off-site within an external agency. Informal interactions, of a debriefing and resource-sharing nature, occurred in groups of two or more, depending on concurrent availability, and dealt with day-to-day concerns. Had the overtures to engage in more commercial activities reached the levels anticipated in mid-April, it would have been necessary to form additional teams, to accomplish the expansion. These teams would have comprised the individuals from the research group teaming up with other part-time or casual staff to form the pairs required to handle the additional training ventures established.

Participants reported that team effectiveness and interaction on the group objective – moving on involvement in negotiations and activities to expand their ‘commercial’ interactions – had been achieved. The participants reviewed the impact of the inputs and interactions on their operations towards the end of Phase 2. It was noted that ‘the idea of going in pairs’ and ‘the other person is there to help you’ was a part of how the participants were now engaging with negotiations to explore commercial opportunities.
Team effort was applied in the work of preparing grants submissions. It needs to be said that the interdependent team nature of grant submission preparation had been established before the intervention. What the intervention appears to have done was confirm that the team approach was a useful way of addressing the submission task. The process gathered additional information and additional ways of understanding the issues. That additional information was now available from the group interaction, compared with relying on what one individual knew. The intervention, by gathering the group together and engaging in some joint brainstorming of negotiation preparations, had built some common understanding of the issues that need to be addressed in a submission and its associated negotiations (the ‘interests’ analysis, for example). The process would be expedited when it was next done, and the ‘interests’ analysis provided a structure for checking all the elements of a proposal.

The participants reported back on progress with negotiations and active projects to group sessions in March, April and June 2000. At the June group session, the participants jointly considered how they could extend their current activities: to inform the organisation of progress and to seek more detailed information of administrative processes involved in these kinds of enterprises. This was a ‘new departure’ for them, and could be considered to be a measure of their confidence which had grown with the combination of inputs and the positive nature of the responses from their contacts with external agencies.

The professional development activity was judged to have achieved a development of the level of support already established amongst the group members. Participant evaluations, expressed at the end of a number of sessions in their individual reflections, noted appreciation of the group interactions, and how the inputs assisted in knowing and understanding their colleagues. Participant evaluations, explored in a group session at the end of Phase 2, included the assessment that the intervention ‘welded the group together’. The inputs and interactions of the professional development activity had given them individually a greater appreciation of the differences in the group, and the contributions other individuals in the group had to make to the new endeavours. One participant expressed the view that as a group they were now ‘more comfortable with one another and with differences’ (EP2). However, in that same group discussion a contrary view was held and expressed. I posed a question of the nature of that session
compared with similar team meetings. The contrary view of ‘no different - much the same as usual’ (EP4) was expressed, but was not followed up by myself, or by the group, on the day, in the group session.

5.3 Case 2 – Community Nursing Health Services Group

5.3.1 Overview

The second group of professional practitioners undertaking the professional development activity was of five nurses who were engaged in consulting and providing management advice in the field of community nursing (CNHS group) in an outer urban area. A significant proportion of their work was out-of-office, involving travelling to the homes of clients to provide the service. The agreed, 40 hour engagement was conducted in group sessions between June 2000 and December 2000. The sessions were held at a facility associated with a community church-based domiciliary nursing service, in work hours, that is to say, it was ‘away from the office’ for four of the five participants. Access was championed by one of the participants with whom I had a close personal association, including sharing of professional concerns in the areas of management responsibilities. The group was of self-selecting volunteers, with points during the process for the participants to review ongoing participation. The element of negotiating continuing with the process, and what the focus of the group was to be, was formally discussed in the without-prejudice session at the beginning, and during the sessions of 6 July, 24 August and 19 October.

5.3.2 Participants

The five female participants were experienced nurses whose service in the senior consulting roles ranged from 2 to 21 years. All participants had experience of more than one employer, and four of the five had been with their current employer in excess of five years. One participant experienced a formal change in her role during the period of the research project. Three of the five were not Australian born, and two of these came from the same Mediterranean country where English was not their first language. Ages ranged from forty five to sixty four and three participants were of an age where retirement was an imminent option. In one case the retirement option was a potential alternative to work, with pluses and minuses, while the eldest participant was actively postponing retirement, but in an ambivalent way.
Four of the nurses were Clinical Nurse Consultants (CNCs) operating within the regional Area Health Service. Their specific specialities included oncology, stoma therapy, palliative care, and primary care/health education/research support. The fifth participant was Co-ordinator to a very small community church-based domiciliary nursing service. Of the Area Health Service personnel, three operated out of one facility, and the fourth came from another site. They were selected to attend the initial, without-prejudice session, of 8 June 2000, by their supervisor, a Nurse Unit Manager, on the basis of the nature of their role which involved ‘isolation’ – not usually working in close association with other nursing or team members. The fifth member had drawn the research project proposal to the attention of the Area Health Service’s Nurse Unit Manager as being something with the potential to address some aspects of current management interest in ‘peer supervision’. As a participant, the fifth member was interested in being in touch with changes in the Area Health Service, and having access to a professional peer forum.

The application of the MBTI indicated each participant had a different personality type, and one matched with my type – INTJ. One participant had a personality type matching with the predominant type in the ABE group – ENFP. The other three types present were ESFJ, ESFP and INFJ (see Glossary for details of these codes). The scoring of the other self-assessment and awareness tools indicated differences between the participants.

5.3.3 Professional Context

For the CNHS participants, the change impacting on their professional practice could be described as that arising from an organisational shift of strategic direction in relation to community nursing. For the four based in the Area Health Service, corporate restructuring, involving a number of management changes, had occurred, destabilising the continuity of management and taking the emphasis away from nursing to administrative systems. A concurrent shift in emphasis, from provision of clinical services, to more engagement in preventative health programs, was noticed. The shift can be seen to have constituted a challenge to the legitimacy of the personal choice of clinical service as the focus of their professional endeavour, for three out of the four
individuals – the consultants in oncology, palliative care and stoma therapy. Further, the shift from the paternalist role, of the expert taking full responsibility for the nature and conduct of care, to endeavouring to have the autonomy of the patient re-asserted, was part of standard operating procedures. Patient autonomy was now expected to be expressed by the person with the condition (or a member of their family support network) being encouraged to take responsibility for choices within that care.

For the participant based in the community church-based domiciliary nursing service, these changes were part of the milieu to which the agency, where she was coordinator, needed to respond. The changes in the public sector represented an opportunity for the agency to expand as a service provider, but also held some attendant risk, given the agency’s limited resource base.

5.3.4 Where, when and what aspects of the implementation

Generally speaking the CNHS group was able to schedule and devote three-hour blocks to the project. However, because of individual obligations and other already established leave arrangements, there was less likelihood of all participants being able to attend all sessions. The initial without-prejudice session was conducted in a meeting room at the Area Health Service base, over one and a half hours in the afternoon of 8 June 2000. The first three sessions were held in consecutive weeks, from 21 June to 6 July 2000, which gave impetus to the process. The 21 June session was held in the morning, while all other sessions were afternoon occasions, and these and succeeding group sessions were held in the meeting room of the church-based domiciliary nursing service. The remaining sessions were then paced at fortnightly intervals, although there were occasional departures from that program. One session, in August, was brought forward. Two, three-week breaks occurred in September and October. A month break arose between the October session and the November session, and two sessions were held a week apart in November, followed by a month break before the final December session. One participant noted that she experienced a sense of a loss of connection if there was a break of more than two weeks between sessions.

The conduct of the design, what inputs were delivered when, differed substantially from the presentation with the ABE group. While the same design structure material was
Contributing to Learning to Change

presented to the CNHS group in the without-prejudice session, it was also moderated by
the offer of an alternate route, where I indicated

Instead of my input up front, you might use this opportunity to explore
a professional concern of yours. My role would be as an outsider, to
be the naïve novice, to your discipline and its practice. Then as I
engage, I may have some input to contribute, in the area of self-
awareness, of group processes, of reflective practice, of critical
thinking, to help us all engage in the enhanced exploration of the
professional concern …
So it would focus fairly quickly on practice concerns for you. It would
be more fluid than the above structure.

(Part of the schedule of inputs and program tabled 8 June 2000)

This difference was a result of my reflections on the conduct of the design with the first
group, and I elaborate on this aspect of the implementation in Chapter 7.1.5.

The sequencing of the key activities through the 14 sessions was as follows:

• 8 June – without prejudice session and issue of Benchmark Questionnaire,
  MBTI Forms, and Ethics Permission form and information
• 21 June – further group brainstorming exploration of powerlessness; sharing of
current practice concerns; introduction of MBTI material and explanations
• 29 June – group brainstorming exploration of efficacy of debriefing; sharing of
current practice concerns and discussion developing into a proposal to act on and
through the Clinical Nurse Consultants Forum (CNC Forum, for further details
see Chapter 5.3.7.1); development of MBTI understanding
• 6 July – further development on understanding of MBTI, and its relationship to
stress; Tolerance of Ambiguity assessment tool; reflections of assessment and
implications in nursing practice; further sharing of current practice concerns;
reflections on saying no and confirmation of intent to proceed with action to
reclaim the CNC Forum; resolve to continue on a fortnightly basis
• 20 July – reflection on effectiveness of process to date; Locus of Control
assessment tool; further sharing of practice concerns; suggestion of working up
an item for presenting to the Area Health November Conference
• 3 August – group brainstorming of possible item for the November Conference;
stress assessment tool and inputs about stress management strategies; decision to
meet on 10 August to settle involvement in November Conference
10 August – stress and blood pressure; feedback on attempt to get on the CNC Forum agenda; suggestion of alternative approach to CNC Forum; individual’s uncharacteristic disengagement challenged and deeper exploration of current stressing situations; sense that group session was different, and significant; issue of individual support and group effectiveness

24 August – reassessment of group progress and review of previous personal and group reflective work; report of letter to convene CNC Forum for CNC professional concerns; discussion of current practice concern

7 September – participant sharing of sensitive practice issue, and feedback from other participants; Human Values assessment tool; Relative Values assessment tool; Attitudes/Beliefs/Values progressive layers model; matrix of goals and relationships competing in conflict situation

28 September – follow up on participant’s sensitive practice issue; further engagement with values, with MBTI and management styles and MBTI and stress; Johari window as an explanatory model

19 October – report on CNC Forum result; consideration of focus of deliberations – personal or professional and organisational focus; thinking processes and language; use of de Bono six hats to analyse a current practice concern

9 November – report on November Conference, on second CNC Forum deliberations; sources and forms of power; de Bono’s six hats applied to observations and reflections from 19 October session

16 November – issue from CNC Forum deliberations raised and discussed; exploration of peer support experience and understanding; discussion of organisation culture issues and management of professionals; sharing a round of recent self-assertion actions; issue of Progress Questionnaire

14 December – Christmas celebration; discussion of dynamics between CNC Forum and management in response to change coming from revitalised Forum; management and its constraints and options; management and industrial activity; closure process

5.3.5 Group context

The CNHS group had not operated together as a group, or work team, before.
5.3.6 **CNHS Group objectives**

In the without-prejudice session discussion, which sought to explore whether the prospective participants saw any benefit in participating with the research project, discussion developed to ask whether the group had what could be described as ‘common concerns’. I operated as discussion scribe, capturing individual inputs on a whiteboard. The group identified issues of: ‘isolation’; ‘powerlessness’; ‘change’; and complexity associated with competing values involved in having to fulfil the various different roles expected of this level of staff. One of the participants, in summarising the discussion, spoke of the concerns as expressing an ‘absence of appreciation’. From these common concerns, and my research project frame, I then asked ‘can a climate of appreciation be built in a group like this?’ Another of the participants rephrased and reframed what I asked in a way that conveyed the issues more clearly. Others nodded agreement. I then asked ‘if in a group like this there is the climate of appreciation because you are peers with similar issues – is that enough?’ A second participant responded with ‘don’t know till we try’, to which my response was ‘well that’s action research for us’. This exchange appeared to be sufficient for the invitees to agree to proceed, and to begin to make arrangements for further meetings and procedures to help participants remain part of the process when anticipated absences arose.

5.3.7 **CNHS Group outcomes**

In contrast with the ABE group, the CNHS group did not establish or negotiate a specific action outcome target or effort focus, like negotiation, in the without-prejudice phase. As the engagement in the process unfolded, the frame of testing peer support became more evident as an underlying value of the group. The first two formal sessions (21 and 29 June, which involved only the Area Health participants) explored current practice concerns by discussion. These discussions coalesced around an intent which was followed up by action by the Area Health members of the group to ‘reclaim’ the Clinical Nurse Consultants Forum (CNC Forum) from administrative matters to restore its focus on clinical professional concerns. The coalescence appeared to develop out of my focusing on the material that went onto the whiteboard in the first without-prejudice session, the processes to unearth more reflective detail, and my questioning that had an action orientation. The rate of the formation of such an action
objective was a surprise to me, and the non-Area Health participant who had missed the first two formal sessions. In the third session on 6 July, I took action to test their resolve on that proposal, and to seek to release them from any social pressure coming from my action orientation and inputs.

As the sessions progressed, it became apparent that the participants returned to some of the without-prejudice session issues, sometimes using the same terms, sometimes expressed in a slightly different form.

5.3.7.1 CNC Forum

The Clinical Nurse Consultants Forum (CNC Forum) was a formally auspiced monthly meeting of Clinical Nurse Consultants for the Area Health Service. Indications were that it had started out its life as an informal (and out of hours) network of CNCs for mutual support, focusing on clinical issues. In time it had developed to include being a forum for technical issue educative inputs from external specialists. As its benefits accrued it had been gathered into the formal activities of the Area Health Service, with organisational acknowledgement and support. It would appear that when the process of corporatisation and the expansion and acceleration of managerial system changes commenced, what had been management visits to provide information about change became a management forum for the dissemination of information about administrative matters. More recently, attendance and involvement of CNCs, in the forum, had been waning.

The initial attempt, by one of the project participants, to inject clinical emphasis into the Forum agenda of 13 July, 2000, failed. Only one group member had been able to be at the meeting and found the set agenda impenetrable. The group reaffirmed their commitment to the proposed change at the 10 August 2000 session and devised a revised strategy – that of taking the initiative to convene a special meeting among the CNCs only, to discuss the current effectiveness of the forum. A letter was drafted to follow up on that initiative, and tabled for consideration and suggestions at the 24 August 2000 session. The participants reported signs that the intended reclaiming had been accomplished: the revamped CNC Forum group was operating autonomously on its own agenda, having its first meeting on 5 October 2000, with further two meetings.
before the professional development activity closed in December. Participants reported at 19 October session that the group had met, and with a good representation of CNCs. My notes recorded:

Group have resolved to get together, first Thursday of month, monthly; have decided to have some subgroups; are documenting what they are about; have decided a bit of what they want to do, and who they want to do it; decided on what to call themselves; one of the subgroups – industrial (HDOR-13/113, 19 October 2000)

In a post-session discussion with one of the Area Health participants on 9 November after a second report of positive activity and engagement of other CNCs in the revamped forum, it was affirmed that ‘what has happened out of this intervention is that the CNCs have reclaimed the forum for their goals’. At our final 14 December meeting one of the participants noted

that there were signs of a change in the dynamics since the CNCAG had taken back its authority/ exercised its autonomy. That [one of the NUMs] was asking HP1 what the CNCAG might think about .... (HDOR-17/168, 9 November 2000)

What I found more telling\footnote{I need to elaborate why I describe this as 'more telling'. This seeks to indicate my understanding of their appreciation (intuitive?) about powerlessness and power structures, and the role of the 'caucus' as an in-group power mechanism. BUT my description is (a) intuitive; (b) only my reading of the matter. What this 'stop' and 'think' about how I am expressing my understanding, in my writing, indicates, is how much interpretation is implicit, and conveyed in choice of words!} was the reluctance of the participants to use the research project group time to engage in any ‘issues caucusing’ for the larger forum. At the 7 September meeting, when the letter convening the forum to discuss professional concerns had been circulated, I asked was there anything in particular that needed to be discussed to prepare for the forum. The response was no, and as one participant expressed it: ‘It's now wait and see what develops; it's over to the CNCs at the forum’ (HP3). A second participant’s comment was to the effect that she thought we were on a journey, that the CNC forum was an outcome of that journey, and would have its own life separate. I queried did she have any suggestion about what was the next step for the peer support group on its journey? Her response was ‘nothing in particular’. She indicated that her perception was that ‘what was happening was that the space to come apart from the normal busyness of work had given them space for this support, this journey’ (HP1).
At the 19 October meeting, the group again resolved to continue exploring the personal development side of the professional development activity, for the personal development outcomes that they were valuing. I noted that for HP5 the role of the group was ‘giving her the wherewithal to be clear about where she was going, that every now and then she finds herself off the rails; this group, its focus, helps her get back on the rails, helps her ‘deal with' multiple pressures’. For another, my session observations noted the perception was that the peer support group’s function was ‘to have what goes on here which will equip them to contribute to the CNC Forum group interaction’ (HP1). A third participant noted that her involvement with the group was generating confidence in that she was setting action targets and getting feedback that ‘yes I did manage that’ (HP3). A fourth participant noted that some things were being transferred from the group of participants to the CNC Forum: ‘getting it out there to speak about it – making it objective – and that was important’ (HP4).

5.3.7.2 Change on isolation

The sense of ‘isolation’, raised as an issue of common concern in the without-prejudice session, was dissipated, in part, by it being voiced as a common concern. I noted in the without-prejudice session observations that one participant remarked that ‘seeing these things are common – important – less isolated’ (HP3).

The convening of the group over the next 13 sessions built relationships where peer support was expressed at a fairly high level and can be expected to be picked up as needed, and especially on a one-to-one basis. The reclaiming of the CNC Forum, as a professional issues forum, meeting on a monthly basis, provides an occasion when the four participants from the Area Health Service will have an opportunity to see one another together at the same time, providing an ongoing sense of relationship for such an exchange. The Area Health participants suggested that the fifth participant could be invited, be welcome at and included into that forum, since there were CNCs from the hospital sector as well as the community nursing sector. It was not clear that this connection was followed through in a way that meant that the fifth participant was incorporated into that potential support group.
For the fifth participant the review of the personal and group reflections on 24 August resulted in sharing her particular situation with the group. She shared that she had been reflecting on isolation since its identification on 8 June and was asking herself questions like – why was she isolated?, did she feel isolated?, what was needed to deal with isolation? These questions took her through the process of thinking about where the domiciliary nursing service was up to and what the board needed to know to be more effectively involved, so that she was not isolated. She identified what she saw as contributing to the isolation, and how the inputs from the professional development activity had helped her deal with that. My session observations captured a report of her having ‘the courage to make a certain approach to the board, and then the next day hanging on to it and not following through on her 'felt' reaction of ringing all the members and apologising’ (HP5).

5.3.7.3 Change on powerlessness

Powerlessness had been raised in the first without-prejudice session, explored in some detail in the second session of 21 June, and touched on from time to time in other sessions (29 June, 6 July, 28 September, 19 October, 9 November 16 November, 14 December). There were indications that the peer support group, the inputs, and individual actions to make changes which were undertaken by some individuals, had shifted the ground on the feelings of powerlessness. One participant noted in her reflections on 19 October ‘We seemed to have gone back to early days, but because of the work we had done previously we were able to deal more productively with it.’ (HP3) Towards the end of the time with the group, one participant remarked that the group was revisiting the issues raised at the beginning, but whereas in the beginning ‘it was what we were feeling; now it's what we are feeling and thinking about it; and we are talking about it and the language we are using is different’ (HP4). In the next session another participant reiterated the perception, and added her view that part of the difference was that they were now ‘exploring possible solutions and alternatives’ (HP1).

5.3.7.4 A second group action proposal

By comparison with the action to reclaim the CNC Forum, another proposal was floated for a joint effort, but came to nought. The Area Health Service runs a November
Conference. It was proposed that the group might prepare a joint presentation for the
Conference. The joint presentation was conceived as a possible vehicle for raising
some of the concerns expressed in the group about issues with, and the direction of,
current community nursing practices. The initiator of the proposal was the non-Area
Health participant. The proposal was discussed in some detail at two sessions, but no
sense of consensus or closure on what to do and how was reached. A session was
convened to specifically deal with such preparations and to reach some closure on the
matter. The group failed to make a decision to proceed with the action intention.

I can ‘read’ this outcome in a number of ways. One way is to take the outcome at face
value, as indicating that the design did not lead to action or change, and therefore the
design was unsuccessful. Looking more closely at the design’s intentions, and the
material available in the data, and elements of the underlying stories available in the
conceptual framework used to support the design intentionality, a number of other
constructions that can be made which suggest that, on the contrary, the design was
operating successfully, and in this case proceeding with action would have been
inappropriate. Whether the result is then taken as disconfirming evidence, or as
confirming evidence, might then depend on the interpretive frame being used.

The examination of the outcome, for indications of how the design might be improved,
highlighted the following subtler alternative readings:

- At the time designated to decide to proceed, and therefore to undertake
  additional preparations to act, another value, the issue of providing personal care
  within the peer group, competed with the action proposal for the November
  Conference. The specific and timely personal care value can be seen to have
  prevailed over the less personal, distanced action.

- The group had developed and expressed a group value for having the liberty to
  say no, which was then respected, in-practice. One participant had reservations
  about the prospective efficacy of the CNC Forum. Another participant had
  reservations about the efficacy of involvement with the November Conference.
  Neither of these participants had been present in the sessions when each of the
  proposals was first mooted. When both reluctant participants did express their
reservations about the CNC Forum and the November Conference no overt and direct attempt was taken, in the group forum, to convince them otherwise.

- Not only was it affirmed that participants could say no in this group, compared with their experience of the organisational culture, there was support for the expression of difference arising from personal preferences. That support allowed for difference to be affirmed and accommodated without becoming conflict. In that context, more in-depth detail about the proposal and additional experiential instances were brought to the table and reflected on, which allowed the potential efficacy of the CNC Forum to be reviewed to the point where the reservations were dealt with, and the group was able to progress that action proposal.

Summary

The two illustrative case studies provide an indication of the effectiveness of the professional development activity design, in-action, and support the conclusion that, at the level of the participants’ expressed objectives for engaging in a professional development activity, outcomes were achieved that met those objectives.

These findings indicate that the design was flexible enough to accommodate the expression of the relevant and timely needs of the participants. As such, the findings are consistent with the literature of adult education indicating that attention to the relevant and the timely is an important aspect of successful programs.

The internal context, by honouring the autonomy of the participants, affirming individual differences by building self- and other- awareness about those differences, drawing on reflection on experience, and sharing these in a group of peers, provided an environment that encouraged personal agency and agency in individual and group endeavour.
6 DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE – DESIGN IN ACTION

Overview

The professional development activity was designed to achieve change. Part of the design was that certain inputs were expected to produce change on a number of key dimensions for the individual. These inputs, separately, and in combination, and conducted in the context of a small group of peers, and with a focus on professional practice issues, were expected to develop the capacity to make change in the interests of achieving more effectiveness in professional practice. From my evaluation of the evidence gathered, from the variety of sources available, change did occur, and on the dimensions identified. While the level of change did not always reach designer expectations, it did provide the participants with sufficient resources to become more active and intentional in working with areas of practice, which, until the professional development activity was conducted, appeared to be beyond them. This chapter explores these findings along the key dimensions identified before the professional development activity was conducted: self-awareness; other-awareness; peer group or team effectiveness issues; development of explicit reflective work at the individual level and in a group context; engaging in thinking about thinking, challenging thinking, understanding, or assumptions; and action learning. The data available, from the various forms of reporting and recording change, and moving from the least constrained self-reporting form used and collected, to the facilitator’s observation and interpretation, is substantially consistent, and the composite picture derivable increases in authority as the contribution from each form of data is made. In reporting this composite, I have focused on the material that adds richness to an understanding of the dimensions explored.

I also need to note that while ‘self-awareness’ and ‘reflective work’ have been separated out, I am now much more aware of self-awareness being both content and process, and of reflective work’s contribution to the development of self-awareness on any
Contribution to Learning to Change

dimension. Consequently, separating the data into these categories tends to be a limiting device for reporting, but at this stage I know of no better mechanism to deal with the data, without moving outside the bounds set by my initial inquiry frame, where I proposed participant anonymity, and where I intended to focus on the design and its outcomes rather than focusing in a way where the impact on participants, in their individuality and their particular responses, was explored in depth. I am now much more aware of how framing my inquiry in this way needs to be challenged in order to be able to conduct effective inquiry of learning to change. But that is a matter of being wise after the event.

6.1 Change in self-awareness

6.1.1 Self-reporting by way of end-of-session reflections

The end-of-session reflections, at an individual level, showed evidence, in all but one situation, that self-awareness was developed, and the development was appreciated.

Responses indicating awareness of change on this dimension included statements:

The analysis of types was very enjoyable. It provided insights into why we are the way we are. ... More importantly, it explained why I found many times through my working life, great frustration in other people not being able to see the consequences of the plans that were made. (EP1)

I enjoyed the interaction and discussions. I also enjoyed the time out to sit, reflect and delve into myself. (Sounds egotistical – I know but I mean it constructively). Useful: The layering and connecting of information. I can see implications for locus of control in my whole life. The tendency to take things on board and look to things I can change about myself to fix things. I feel it is important to be responsible for one's actions but I also see that not always is it in your control or your realm of responsibility. (EP2)

Reaching personal understanding of me in relation to work/ personal experiences (EP5)

Meaningful: Understanding of M-Briggs - INTJ. Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale. Greater acceptance of [self] (HP5)

A number of the participants found the self-awareness tools and process confronting, and for two, at least, this experience did not change with time and further exposure to more tools and explanatory material, even though the additional tools and explanatory material were found to be useful and enlightening. Where one noted the initial analysis
Contributing to Learning to Change

to be ‘enjoyable’ and providing ‘insights’ she reported in two later sessions that the self-awareness was ‘confronting’: ‘I agreed with the result - just didn't like myself.’, and ‘I am still having difficulty looking at and assessing myself’ (EP1). A second participant reiterated an initial response of being challenged in a later session, remarking

I found the information challenging. I will need time to reflect on the assessments, recommendations and implications. … Self knowledge for knowledge sake I feel is pointless. I will need to digest the info and build on the self knowledge to hopefully make a change (EP2).

While the above response was ‘hopeful’ of the role of the work on self-awareness to assist with making a change, another’s series of responses showed a greater recognition of the potential to contribute to change, and self-awareness of change in perception of that potential over the course of the program:

Superbly interesting discovering meaning for one’s own ideas and actions and comfortable sphere to put forward ideas for future change. … I am always aware that I have the ability to make personal change but that the weight of the years and years of events and lack of adequate supportive understanding have contributed to that not happening as it could have. (HP1 29 June 2000)

Every piece of information regarding our knowing own strengths and weaknesses is a gift for us to build. (HP1 3 August 2000)

I feel empowered during the hours together and also notice a change in my attitude to my "forward" (?) thinking. (HP1 16 November 2000)

Some participants saw that the self-knowledge was helpful, but did not necessarily see how it could contribute to taking action, or change. If the self-awareness material was contributing to change, the contribution was subtle, and not readily recognised. Any such link was expressed more in terms of potentialities or doubts. For others the uncertainty was expressed by use of a journey metaphor.

For the participant who had an established reflective process for personal development, the engagement with the tools and the interactions in the group were found to confirm past work on personal development and to challenge work on personal development, that is change, in new areas.
6.1.2 Self-reporting through the Benchmark and Progress report questionnaires

Only six of the ten participants (four from the ABE group and two from the CNHS group) returned progress report questionnaires. All six registered change for more than one of the categories used in the questionnaire, and, except for one report, the change registered was in the direction of an increased effectiveness or awareness of that aspect in their practice. Three participants (two from the ABE group and one from the CNHS group) registered appreciable change, in the direction of increase, for all of the categories in the questionnaire.

For change in self-awareness, four of the six participants registered a change involving an increase in awareness.

6.1.3 Indications of change as observed during in-session interactions

For the in-session interactions, for the ABE participants, the material I identified as associated with self-awareness and its development mostly related to learning how personal issues, associated with self in negotiation, and stress, might be better understood and addressed. This appeared to be accomplished by way of increased understanding of the meaning, implications and applications of the tools, to these issues. In particular, the whiteboard capturing, EB3, built up during the session of 9 December 1999, of what was limiting their effectiveness in applying procedural and technical knowledge about negotiation, identified barriers associated with person-based responses to situations that developed during negotiations. The record of those issues was returned to during the session of 23 March 2000 when checking out the nature of negotiation against the analysis of stressors from the session of 16 March 2000, and reconsidering how ‘negotiation’ might be reframed in a way that managed stressors. As noted in Chapter 5.2.7.1, the new way of looking at negotiation that developed out of the analysis, and the work with self-awareness, took away much of the sense of the ‘personal’ that hung on a negotiation and its outcomes and released them to view negotiation more positively, and in a way more in line with relationship building for future outcomes. Relationship building, for future outcomes, could be considered to be one of the core values of their professional practice.
In my analysis of end-of-session reflections and in-session interactions, for both ABE and CNHS participants, I noticed a pattern of response demonstrating a correspondence between the individually expressed primary interests as indicated in the structured benchmark questionnaire and the material captured in my observation records: the predominant, recurring item, for an individual, frequently matched the expressed primary interest.

For the CNHS group, the interactions I judged to indicate self-awareness were more self-disclosing than indications of development in self-awareness. Of course, one can only disclose what one is aware of. The difference between the data available also reflects (1) the new group aspect of the CNHS experience – it was dependent on self-disclosure to build trust; (2) the teaching frame of the ABE group work – a closer match between inputs and remarks of a self-disclosing nature was possible and seemed to indicate development of self-awareness from those inputs.

Frequently the disclosure, by one in the CNHS group, of sensitive material, would stimulate a round of reciprocity. One such example was the discussion eliciting illustrations of ‘losing it’ – being at the end of one’s tether in the practice context. Another instance was a round when each one described what, in-practice, generated an anger or emotional response. Other instances included sharing responses to stress, and stressors, and detailing the impact of negativity on each individual. That is to say, the ‘round’ happened often enough for me to be able to recognise it as a pattern of interaction in the group, and not just for the self-disclosure. The pattern of each one having a voice on each issue if they wanted, without any necessary prompting from another, was part of the interaction culture established. When someone did not contribute, another would ask whether the silent member had anything to say, or if something else was engaging them at the time.

6.1.4 Exploring a particular case

For one participant I was unable to discern any clear expression of development of self-awareness, or of other-awareness, in the written reflections, and at a level that was consistent with how I was bounding ‘self-awareness’ and ‘other awareness’ for the other participants. This gave me pause to consider: (1) how I was determining these
categories; (2) to what extent ‘unanimity’ of indication of change was an implicit aspect of my evaluation of the effectiveness of the design; (3) what this particular case, because of its difference to the remainder, might convey about either, or both, ‘self-awareness’ and ‘other-awareness’; (4) what else this particular case might be able to tell me about how the design was working or how I was interpreting the available data.

This participant expressed an appreciation that the forum had allowed for the expression of feelings and in three out of the six sessions’ reflections collected. Also appreciated was the forum’s openness to the talking out of problems, expressed in ‘feel better after having offloaded feelings and frustrations’, and a felt sense of support from being in the group for five of the six sessions attended.

I would note that the word ‘feel’ is used by the personality types with the MBTI F preference in either their dominant or auxiliary role, to talk about their ‘processing’/evaluating/thinking about the things they attend to. My MBTI preference is T, and when I use the term ‘feel’ it is in relation to senses, to emotions, and not the logical thinking, reasoning based on evidence. In session, one of the CNHS participants, with the F preference, remarked to the effect that: ‘I use ‘feel’ to talk about my thinking; and when I want to talk about my feelings I say ‘think’ - to give it the tone of rationality’ (HP3). This was a very important contribution to my increasing awareness of difference of expression relating to different foci in thinking processing.

The F preference also expresses as a focus on the personal and subjective, compared to the T preference focus on the task and objective. For this individual, her F preference was not only her dominant function, it was the function in which she would be most comfortable when she was able to express it out, as she engaged with her environment. Further, her sense of comfort with others, and freedom with self-expression, would be determined by how they responded to the primacy given to person-related values. In the Anglo-Australian professional work context, with its supposed technical rationality base, expression of the feeling function values is not always, or readily, affirmed. When these values were responsively affirmed in this group’s interactions, it was as if the flood gates were opened. Her response, in the first session after the without-prejudice process, of ‘Found it great to be able to express feelings within the group without any inhibition’, was indicative of this.
While the expression of feeling was clear, and appreciation of the support from others in the group for the expression of that feeling was also clear, the end-of-session reflections provided no evidence of self-awareness beyond this ‘feeling’ expression. The borderline notes, of ‘There did not appear to be any negatives (for me)’, and ‘Found it a little difficult to concentrate to-day, because of many other external factors which appear to be clouding my judgment at this time’, did not capture any sense of change, for herself, arising from the professional development activity. If this indicates an absence of self-awareness, and its development, at this level, and in this form of expression, then, similarly, there was no corresponding development of other-awareness. The reflections did note that she found some sessions ‘most helpful’, ‘great’, or ‘constructive’, but without any clear expression of how, or why. Again, the MBTI preference provided some explanatory input: her preferred orientation was extraverted, where oral expression takes precedence over written expression (which was the nominated form for the end-of-session reflections), and her objective logic processing function, which operated in her internal mode, was likely to be her least developed function: giving explanations of how, or why, was a less likely occurrence. The oral form (recorded by way of my observations of in-session interactions) conveyed as much self-disclosure as for any of the other participants, and as much indication of other-awareness as for any of the other participants. However, in the mass of in-session interactions I was not able to capture any clear indication of any expression of a ‘change’ in these dimensions that might be linked back to the inputs from the professional development activity design.

6.2 Change in other-awareness

In the design, it was anticipated that other-awareness would develop from the input of materials designed to increase self-awareness. A number of responses of participants indicated that this was the case.

6.2.1 Self-reporting by way of end-of-session reflections

The participants’ end-of-session reflections noted some change to their other-awareness. The groups differed in the thrust of those comments and the differences between the
groups were sufficient to account for this. The ABE group, as has been noted, had some sort of prior, as well as potentially continuing, existence. In that sense it was an established and ‘natural’ group. By comparison, the CNHS group had been specifically formed for the purpose of engaging in this professional development activity. The CNHS group included one participant who operated in a different organisation from the other four, and one of the four, from the same organisation, operated out of a different location. In both these respects, its formation and composition, the CNHS group was not ‘natural’ and had no previous history of established group behaviour or norms to deal with before work could begin on the designed peer support group internal context. For the ABE group, the change in other-awareness and especially of other-awareness of group members, was more likely to be related to the inputs from the design, than for the CNHS group, where I would expect that mechanisms other than ‘inputs from the design’ would be activated to develop other-awareness of, and within, the group. In the CNHS group, if the inputs from the design were to have the impact claimed, then it might be indicated in the rate of formation of other-awareness, and the quality of the other-awareness being different from what would be expected to occur out of the mechanisms normally in use in such a ‘new group’ situation.

The ABE group expressed their comments concerning the development of other-awareness in the light of information generated by the input tools. Their focus was on how the tools helped them discern difference in others. One participant described her response to the MBTI tool as ‘it explained the different types of people. It provides a better understanding of why people operate the way they do’ (EP1). The more direct application of discerned difference was an increased awareness of differences and implications within their own group of five as a working team, as in the instances ‘Greater insight into who my friends and coworkers are’ (EP5) and ‘Value everybody and their input. It is reassuring to know that we can work as a team under any new situation’ (EP5). Some participants indicated an awareness of the contribution other-awareness might make to engaging in a negotiation, and noted that an increase in other-awareness might lead to improved practice. Indeed, the Harvard Negotiation Project analysis tool specifically directed attention to considering the other’s interests in a negotiation, the nature of the relationship with the other and the communication implications of the substance of the negotiation as well as the process. In those terms it is no great surprise that reflections in those sessions recorded that it was useful ‘to look...
at how we react to the negotiation but also to consider how the other side may react’ (EP1) and ‘the more I am used to thinking in these terms and stepping into another's shoes the better able I will be to bring all concepts to play’ (EP2).

Other-awareness was also recognised as having the potential to contribute to change by increasing practice effectiveness. One noted that the tools helped her ‘see where others are coming from’ (EP2) and that ‘the useful aspects in self knowledge and how we relate to others and how others relate to us are things/items/insights that I will take away, reflect on and hopefully use. This should aid in improving of relationships in many aspects’ (EP2).

In the CNHS end-of-session reflections, comments categorised as ‘awareness of others’ demonstrated some of their basic ‘getting to know strangers’ activity, for instance one commented ‘Great getting to know them a lot more’ (HP4). Another aspect expressed was their care for other, as in ‘Appreciating the contact and feelings of others in the group. … It's a shame HP2 will not be able to make it. I think she really benefited and that makes me feel good’ (HP3). Four of the five participants also made some mention about the impact of the absence of one or other from the group. Sometimes its impact on interaction dynamics was noticed. The most common comment however, was an expression of regret for being ‘incomplete’.

**6.2.2 Self-reporting through the Benchmark and Progress report questionnaires**

For change in other-awareness, three of the six reported an increase in their awareness. For change experienced around the dimension of interactivity between self and other (Items B5.1 and B5.2 of the questionnaire) four and three of the six reported change.
6.2.3 Indications of change as observed during in-session interactions

For the ABE participants the in-session interactions indicating a change in other-awareness focused on how the information from the tools might apply to other-interaction situations, especially the implications of this understanding to the negotiation context. Despite their intention to not focus on their teaching, a number of interactions demonstrated that they could not refrain from making connections with the implications of the inputs to the teaching context.

For the CNHS participants, the in-session interactions focusing on other-awareness related to responding to others in the group, especially with caring attention. Similarly, interactions focusing on other-awareness for people outside the group, clients, peers and other participants in the workplace, expressed a focus on primary care. I did not consider such indications to be change in other-awareness, but rather disclosure, and my observation of it was part of my getting to know them and their natural level of other-awareness and its focus. Their other-awareness focus was able to be translated into advocacy which allowed the participants to overcome their reluctance to confront, especially when bureaucratic systems limited their effectiveness in delivering care. The expression of other-awareness in advocacy, was, in my view, one of the factors that allowed the group to act to reclaim the CNC Forum (see detail in Chapter 5.3.7.1).

For the CNHS group a clear indication of change in other-awareness, as a result of engaging in the professional development activity, came from the experience of undertaking the assessment process, in the group. One of the participants made connections between her experience of undertaking the assessments associated with the tools as well as the understanding developing from the tools and others’, especially patients or clients, responses to clinical assessment processes. She shared her insight and a discussion developed, reflecting on the nature of assessment of patients, the quality of information gained, and how the quality of the relationship impacted on that. The participants then drew out implications of the assessment process of patient care needs, especially for the quality of provision of care developed from such an assessment, including the resources and logistics issues involved in the return of patients to hospital where such assessment had proved inadequate. The outcome, a
group flipchart record (HB-4), became a resource for ongoing considerations of health care and quality issues in health care.

6.3 Change in awareness about group and group processes

6.3.1 Self-reporting by way of end-of-session reflections

The participants’ end-of-session reflections were unanimous in recording appreciation of the support available from the group and its interactions. In both groups the incompleteness of the group was noted as having an impact on what could be done on that occasion.

In the ABE group the peer support was especially focused on the work with negotiations. A number of participants recognised the way interaction in the group brought change, especially to their own thinking. One could ‘also see the use of having filled in one together as a group. The balance and interchange of info was excellent’ (EP2).

In the CNHS group the appreciation of support, which sometimes generated change for the individual, was at a more personal level, as with ‘I feel that the group recognised that one of our members was needing some extra support, and also support of a different nature. I was glad we did this, however if we are going to be effective we should not continue to do it. Perhaps as group members we need to try to put aside our individual daily stressors [so] that the group can act for our collective benefit’ (HP3).

Some of the positive expressions of support from the group could be discounted as being merely tactfulness, trying to write something about the session when this kind of reflective work was new or different, and writing to please the facilitator, and not wanting to report ‘bad news’. Given that the expression of positiveness about the ‘feeling’ in the group was not expressed in each case may also indicate the participants’ different foci of attention, and needs, in operating conditions (something also expressed in their MBTI preferences).
Tracking the comparison of end-of-session reflections of participants in the CNHS group indicated that the experience of group effectiveness, while not one of linearly increasing effectiveness, was recognised as having grown. According to one of the participants, using her evaluative criteria, the group may have developed ‘Yes - I think we are going the "alternate route" - certainly fluid - don't know if the group "tide" is high or low. Can't wait to see calm waters and a channel of "worth" to explore together’ (HP5 10 August 2000), but did not reach the level of being ‘action learning peer support’ as she asked, reflectively ‘Where does this fit into peer support?’ (HP5 28 September 2000) and concluded ‘The end of the course ... what has it meant? How has it helped now - future? Action Learning Peer Support? Peer support - yes. Action and learning - yes. But not connected to the peer support. Am I a pimple or a wart or an adornment attached to the group?’ (HP5 16 November 2000).

6.3.2 Indications of change as observed during in-session interactions

For the ABE group, the in-session interactions included unsolicited remarks evaluating group effectiveness, responses to my specific questioning about group effectiveness, and a variety of activities which sought to contribute to group effectiveness. For one of the participants, team effectiveness was a role responsibility, and providing access to me to conduct my professional development activity, with the group, was one of her many expressions of the discharge of that responsibility observed over the period of my engagement with them. The development of team effectiveness for the ABE participants has been dealt with previously in Chapter 5.2.7.2.

For the CNHS group, scepticism about the sustainability of effective group process was expressed in the without-prejudice session. In-session interactions indicated that the desire for effective group process was a high value for these participants. They expressed appreciation of the level at which the group operated, and I engaged them in exploring why this was so. Towards the end of the program the group decided to continue with personal development aspects of the activity rather than focus effort on corporate professional concerns, indicating to me that the group was operating at a more effective level than their previous experience of group support. However, this level of support was not sufficient to allow the group to explore ways and means of continuing with the process beyond the contracted 40 hour commitment. For the four within the
one agency, the recommissioning of the CNC Forum, to address professional concerns, may have been seen as a suitable alternative (see details and discussion previously, Chapter 5.3.7.1). The participants did appreciate the ‘peer support’, but did not see the group operating to provide ‘peer supervision’, although the terms in which ‘supervision’ was understood was not explored in any detail, and at least two models could have been in view: (1) the disciplinary or accountability model, and (2) professional debriefing and mentoring model.

6.4 Change in reflective work

6.4.1 Self-reporting by way of end-of-session reflections

In reporting under this thematic heading I have limited my consideration of ‘reflection’ to those items in the end-of-session material that included the term ‘reflect*’, and used the NUD.IST text searching function to extract these. I did this because during the inquiry I was tending to ‘see’ reflection as including ‘evaluation in the process of inquiry’. As a result, instances that could be interpreted that way simply multiplied to the point of being meaningless. Taking the mechanical filtering approach, available in NUD.IST, gave me an indication of how the participants were choosing to use the term, and what they were referring to when they did. However, taking this approach also meant I would be unable to identify any change in the participants’ reflective processes which might indicate that the design was being effective in the way intended.

At the individual level, the predominant use of the terms ‘reflect’ / ‘reflection’, for the participants, was in association with the personal, the self.

Amongst the ABE participants, one connected reflection with the least enjoyable component of the first phase which she described as ‘Confrontation of self on why I do things and think the way I do (reflection)’ (EP1). For another the connection with reflection and confrontation was expressed in ‘Moving from the unknown to the known when I personally reflected on the session and what it revealed was a little confronting’ (EP5). Another participant observed ‘It's interesting to reflect on self for the purpose of growth and I think I do this (maybe overdo!)’ and in the next session noted a need for more time to do some more ‘sit[ting] with things myself first and consider/reflect’
A similar linking of reflection with change occurred for one participant in the session involving the use of the stress analysis tool, and connections made with the MBTI, when she noted ‘A great exercise in self reflection and self awareness, leading to self change’ (EP5).

Amongst the CNHS participants the personal aspect for one participant was expressed in ‘I got a bit impatient at times - want to move on (reflection slow) but realize I probably need it more than rest of the group - I tend to jump in head first at times’ (HP4). For another it included the awareness, towards the end of the process, that ‘It was good to reflect on the strengths/skills developed over the previous weeks. You almost don't realise it's happening.’ (HP3 9 November 2000). Here, as well as the personal aspect, two other elements are identified: the time element involved in reflective learning; and the subtle nature of change.

6.4.2 Indications of change as observed during in-session interactions

Amongst the ABE participants, observed in-session interactions indicated reflective work being done on a personal level, and in a number of instances on material not captured in the end-of-session notes. One exchange noted how individuals were noticing a change in the nature of their personal written reflective work as a result of the professional development activity. Another exchange noted some ambivalence with reflection when it reached a certain level in their self-identity. In the session where an audio record captured the text, the transcript yielded ‘But even so if you reflect on it at times you can be a lot harsher with yourself then perhaps is necessary [other affirmations] and things niggle at you and worry at you’ (EP1); while another expressed ‘But reflection's at bit like, I don't know, it doesn't stay in the box sometimes that you want it to be in, you find that once you let it out there it's a bit like Pandora's box, [EP3 laugh] it opens up lots of things’ (EP2).

Amongst the CNHS group the introverts requested more time to do the written work. Sometimes metaphor was used in describing the impact of the program on them. Participants acknowledged the value of recording the thinking and reviewing the record, and one wanted to be able to go back to her thinking at the without-prejudice session.
A couple of the in-session reflective instances demonstrated second-order, meta-level connections being made (see also remarks in Chapter 8.6)

Further discussion of the development of reflective work, arising out of the professional development activity, comparing inputs and outcomes, is dealt with in Chapter 7.3.

6.4.3 Indications of change derived from interview records for the ABE participants

The process of using the NUD.IST search function for the term ‘reflect*’ collected material from the interview transcripts for the ABE participants that gave further indications of their understanding of ‘reflection’, ‘reflective practice’, and in some cases the participants recognised benefits from more and different reflective activity, including an awareness of the value of engaging in developing reflective technique.

(EP2) Stepping back and reflecting on it, I've tended to have done more of that in the last probably 12 months then I have previously. I tend to just move on, but I've started to reflect more and say ok why did that happen, what did I do that I could change you know where's the value in that sort of stuff. So I've done, again it's more informal although I do jot down a few notes and you know whatever but yes it's a more reflective, I thought it might be maturity.

(EP5) I do it more in my personal life than I do it in my work.

(EP2) Yes but that's what I'm saying. [EINT-332/392-400]

One participant, acknowledging the inputs from the first two phases of the professional development activity, recognised the value of documenting the reflective work related to the action learning project, as the process unfolded. That became a change in practice as she and her co-participant engaged in action learning on interactions with an external group. When what was done in the mind-map records was reviewed in the second round interview, she recognised that documentation can be done at a number of levels. She remarked ‘But it's also the tendency that you can, on those sorts of things, just keep it to what is physically going on, without looking at why and the wheres and the wherefores and when I look back at those, there's not a lot of reflection on them and that may well be keeping it safe’ (EP2). The acknowledgement that the material collected for the action learning project was ‘safe’ was consistent with a reservation expressed in the Group Session when the kind of reflective work that opens up areas that one would prefer not to be aware of, was referred to as a ‘Pandora’s Box’.
In the instance of the participant who had an established pattern of written reflections, one of the major changes that occurred in the context of the action learning project was with being able to engage with more oral reflecting with others. She noted that ‘The other thing I find is that in talking it over with someone it's clarifying in hearing yourself saying it, often it is clarifying’ (EP4). She had identified one of her learning targets as ‘part of what I've really wanted to do was just be able to talk it out …’ (EP4). Evaluating the process as a whole, she commented about the experience of change in her action learning project, as follows ‘if I had gone into that cold without having done this process before … if I'd gone in unable to do that, well there just would have been this whole wonderful resource that I wouldn't have been able to tap into’ (EP4). Part of the change could be attributed to the change in workplace and role, and the fact that the new workplace had an established procedure for a formal ‘supervision’ relationship of debriefing and mentoring around practice issues. Part was attributed to preparation by, and some intentionality arising from, the experience of the professional development activity.

6.5 Change in thinking about thinking

6.5.1 Self-reporting by way of end-of-session reflections

The personal end-of-session reflections showed instances of individuals engaging in questioning their understandings, assumptions. For both groups of participants the questioning was most pronounced for the way the specific content inputs were contributing to new understanding or insights. In some cases, the new insights and understandings were generated by some integrative function of the tools: the way they were illuminating prior experience, and suggesting how those experiences might be better understood.

One participant noted that the MBTI material ‘explained the different types of people. It provides a better understanding of why people operate the way they do. More importantly, it explained why I found many times through my working life, great frustration in other people not being able to see the consequences of the plans that were made’ (EP1). A response to the TOA tool included an awareness of a need to reconsider current practice, as one participant noted: ‘Found it really interesting to look
at idea of complexity - how if you find it comfortable, not to overlook others may not. For students this is not a difficulty but it is something I'm aware of intolerance with other kinds of relationships’ (EP4). The LOC material prompted one participant to ponder ‘I'm a bit bemused by my relatively (in light of the scores of my colleagues) high score I got for the 'locus of control' survey. Does it mean that I don't take responsibility as well as others? I've always perceived myself as just the opposite (and I've been told that, sometimes, I take on the weight of the world). Does this result reflect something of my (sometimes) almost fatalistic outlook on life? A conundrum indeed!’ (EP3).

One participant gathered up the significance of her experience of the tools in Phase 1 with the comment that she enjoyed ‘the self-knowledge - the 'aha' moments’ (EP2). Another participant expressed the impact of the tools as ‘a gift for us to build’ (HP1). A third recognised the insights developing from the inputs, but was uncertain about their potential application, remarking ‘I gained interesting insights into myself, as I think about things. … These insights do appear to be helping because I feel as if I'm coping better, but I still wonder if I am supposed to do more with these insights. Do they serve another purpose?’ (HP3).

When the focus of the discussion was on values, including using the Human Values tool, and the matrix demonstrating the impact of competing values operating in a dispute, the CNHS participants appeared to have made significant ground. One participant noted ‘I felt more positive about today - as if I learnt something about myself and gained more understanding of myself and my motivation’ (HP3).

The discussions that developed in the group prompted change, and for one that helped her ‘view things much more objectively and explore other possibilities than my own’ (EP5). For another, the group discussion raised ‘comments about giving the managers information on how we want to be managed’ and these were judged to be ‘very thought provoking’ (HP4). In another case, the discussion exploring the relationship of learning and of change prompted the realisation that ‘Even though as teachers we aim to bring about change in our students I hadn't considered the next step or the repercussions in the workplace’ (EP4).
The more significant element, of facility with critical thinking for the development of group reflective work, is evidenced when the participants are prepared to challenge others’ thinking, and seek explanations relating to that thinking. In two instances individuals challenged others’ reasoning or assumptions. In one case the participant was confronted by my self-disclosure, and remarked ‘It is easier to give advice than practise it yourself’ (EP5). In the other case, the application arose in the course of the action learning focus on in-practice activity, and involved an interchange with another individual who was not a member of the group.

6.5.2 Self-reporting through the Benchmark and Progress report questionnaires
All six respondents indicated an increase in awareness about thinking about problems, and for one respondent this was the area where she recorded the largest comparative shift in awareness. The common agreement on this change was the most significant finding arising out of the Benchmark and Progress report process.

6.5.3 Indications of change as observed during in-session interactions
In the ABE group, in-session interactions demonstrating elements of thinking about thinking, reviewing understandings and assumptions, mostly focused around the application and implications of the tools, and a significant change in thinking developed around the understanding of negotiation, as mentioned earlier (Chapter 5.2.7.1). Three participants were prepared to express challenges of my expressed thinking, especially when it was a negative.

In the CNHS group, instances demonstrating thinking about thinking, challenging assumptions and understanding, focused on practice concerns, especially where a clash of values, or the outworking of values differing to those encapsulated in ‘primary care’, appeared to be involved. The demonstrable and effective challenge of differences of view within the group resulted in a deeper exploration of the practice concern. On balance I could not discern whether this represented a change brought about by the impact of the inputs, or was simply a releasing of natural tendencies for that kind of inquiry process in the participants, which became more and more expressed as the group context developed to allow it. Even if it was only the second kind of change, that change speaks for the success of the design in producing the kind of internal context
that encouraged the expression of this kind of thinking, since that was one of the objectives of the design.

### 6.6 Change on taking action (action learning)

The material reported in Chapter 5.2.7 and 5.3.7 constitute changes that came from acting, and which could be attributed, at least in part, to the professional development activity design. The focus here is on any evidence that might indicate how the participants were perceiving the nature of acting, and of making changes in action, that is to say, being more aware about the nature of action learning.

#### 6.6.1 Self-reporting by way of end-of-session reflections

The personal end-of-session reflections showed some evidence of individuals being challenged to act, to make change. In some cases it was the development in self-awareness that promised to indicate what could be changed, and this has been explored in Chapter 6.1.1.

In other cases the potential for change was limited by previous experience, as in the instance of one participant’s judgement that ‘Some of this stuff on stress is very good, but easier said than done. There are other factors which contribute to stress besides the stressor’ (EP3).

Another participant recognised the need to evaluate change in terms of desired goals. She remarked: ‘It's interesting to see opposite values regarded highly and to consider how much you are prepared to change versus how important the desired goal is’ (EP4).

For another, a change in understanding, including an increased sense of empowerment from being heard, was a stimulus to re-enter the fray and try change again.

For others, the role of the group, as the vehicle for identifying difference and working on the thinking related to another way, or in providing support, was a significant aspect of considering action.
For the ABE participants, the focus on negotiation was an aspect of their focus on proposed action and change (see also remarks in Chapter 5.2.7.1). One participant expressed a desire to take the work on negotiation further, and, in particular, to ‘explore how we use it to our best advantage’ (EP1). Another recognised the ‘need to practice skills to develop strategies to increase competence and confidence’ (EP2).

6.6.2 Indications of change as observed during in-session interactions

For the ABE group, one group session was devoted to planning how to share progress with commercial activities with other sections of TAFE. Such a focus can be seen to be indirect evidence of more sense of agency within the group, as well as having success stories to tell. The fact that they were prepared to go public to peers within their organisation, with the outcomes of their work with negotiations to develop customised learning programs for external agencies on a semi-commercial basis, could be considered to be a significant movement in confidence in agency.

In the final ABE group session, convened to reflect on the issue of confidence, one participant commented about the need for commitment in action learning being similar to her expectations of her students to commit to learning:

EP4 [speaking of effectiveness of professional development activity as a whole, a response to my input describing the process and asking why they might not be able to do it on their own] "Well it's a commitment. I guess like our students we expect them to commit to what's happening in there, the same in an action learning process for us, whether we are really committed or not to do it and if you are well then the time and the other things come from that. Whether it's prioritised."

(Group Session Transcript 10 August 2000)

For the CNHS group, in-session interactions focusing on action learning related to their practice issues and telling stories of instances of self-assertiveness, especially since the last time they were together, and which could be considered to have been shared in order to encourage more risky action learning efforts.

6.6.3 Indications of change derived from interview records for the ABE participants

For the ABE group, my access to data for the third phase of the professional development activity inquiry was mostly devoted to interviews. Three interviews were conducted to gather data about the action learning projects that the participants were
engaging in, related to negotiation of ‘commercial’ enterprises. The commercial enterprises constituted a moving out to the marketplace to negotiate providing training to other agencies which would involve the ABE staff delivering customised adult learning programs, mostly under the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program in the first instance.

The first round of interviews was aimed at working with the participants to enunciate objectives in their action learning, and how they might evaluate their effectiveness, relative to those objectives. The second round of interviews was an open reflective session addressing how it was going, and following up on issues arising out of the first interview. The final round of interviews was designed to ‘close’ the program negotiated between myself and the participants – to get an evaluation of how the action learning project had gone to that point, and to inquire about any linkages between their experiences with the action learning project and the first two phases of the professional development activity.

From my analysis of the interview material I consider that it is fair to conclude that the participants expressed a sense of satisfaction with progress with the action, and learning from the process. Going from that conclusion to the next step of claiming that this was a necessary outcome of the design needs to be held lightly. The situation was such that an outcome was expected, the participants’ expressed a socialised sense of reciprocity in being able to contribute to my research program, and we often reframe our experience to cast the best construction we can on it. Any, or all, of these conditions would tend to skew the results towards the positive response.

What I wish to focus on here is to what extent the experience of the action learning process led to increased awareness of the process, and the nature of the change developing in, and out of, the action learning step.

I have remarked earlier, that for the participant who used journaling regularly, a change developing for her, out of the action learning step, was attempting a change in focus of reflective technique – from the written form to the oral form. In identifying the results of taking action, of engaging in the supervisory process, and raising practice and workplace interpersonal relationship concerns within supervisory discussions with
peers, she reported ‘I've been becoming more confident in doing it, … it's ok not to be all perfectly worked out before I speak it but speaking is a process of working it out’ (EP4). However, she was not quite able to identify the precise reason for the change.

In two separate instances the participants’ described their observations in terms that I designate as second-order, meta-level (see Chapter 8.6 for more detail). One of these was recognising that action learning is an essential aspect of teaching. One participant noted ‘What you said before about defining teaching as action learning, it probably is, but until you start thinking of it in terms of action learning you miss that, you know it's part of the skills that you carry around but it needs to be named and recognised’ (EP2). For the participant who had acted to bring my professional development activity to the group, the assessment was that the process, and my facilitation of it, had forced some self-reliance. One of our exchanges demonstrated some mutual recognition that building self-reliance was an aspect of adult learning and, further, building self-reliance in others was part of the participants’ own practice – their bread and butter, and I cite the fuller text of that exchange in Chapter 6.8.3.

6.6.4 Exploring another particular case

What at first glance might have appeared to indicate change in intent to act, developed by the design inputs, when set in the context of in-session interactions, may be better understood to be a usual response. The following represents the complete written end-of-session reflections of HP3, and, as such, is representative of the amount of data I had to work with from the end-of-session material, for an individual. It might be noted that this participant admitted to using ‘feel’ for thinking, and ‘think’ for feeling (Session Observation Records 19 October 2000). The orientation to change and action can be seen (21/6/2000 – ‘what do I do with the information now’; 6/7/2000 – ‘what will we achieve with further meetings'; 28/9/2000 – 'I still wonder if I am supposed to do more with these insights'). The acknowledgement of the contributions of the design inputs can be seen (21/6/2000, 28/9/2000). The interaction of change in self-awareness contributing to other perceptive changes can be seen (7/9/2000, 28/9/2000, 19/10/2000, 9/11/2000, 16/11/2000). On the other hand, this participant also showed a response of thinking-leading-to-action in the first, without-prejudice, session (Session Observation Records 8 June 2000) before any of the design inputs, and later admitted that this was
her general approach to life (Session Observation Records 29 June 2000). Taking that into account, it is much less tenable to claim that the design generated the desired change in this instance. Rather, these reflections indicate some of the thrust that these inputs generated for her. By having all the end-of-session comments together, and leaving the various aspects indicating response to a session and its design and other inputs together, and presenting the material in its chronological sequence, rather than breaking the material up, analytically by separate theme, as has been done in the presentation of information in Chapters 6.1-6.6 to date, a better indication of the whole, and of its interconnectedness, can be conveyed.

Came away feeling much lighter, as if I had unloaded. Appreciating the contact and feelings of others in the group. Really looking forward to other sessions. It's a shame HP2 will not be able to make it. I think she really benefited and that makes me feel good. Myers- Briggs indicator [MBTI] were a really useful tool - perhaps not useful, maybe that wasn't the right word, but 'interesting' tool. What do I do with that information now? (21 June 2000)

I don't seem to have very strong feelings about today's session. Why is this so? I have no idea? It was not unpleasant or negative in any way, I just don't have the 'high' feeling that I had after other sessions. I found it difficult to concentrate, and found personal problems and thoughts creeping in, so that I would lose the thread of a conversation easily. (29 June 2000)

Constructive day, problems worked on and discussed, with options for addressing them suggested. Continuing to feel positive about the whole process. What will we achieve with further meetings? (6 July 2000)

Meeting was different again today. I feel that the group recognised that one of our members was needing some extra support, and also support of a different nature. I was glad we did this, however if we are going to be effective we should not continue to do it. Perhaps as group members we need to try to put aside our individual daily stressors so that the group can act for our collective benefit. (10 August 2000)

I don't feel that we are getting anywhere, we get off the track too easily. I also feel that I have so much personal stuff happening that it is overshadowing any work related difficulties. Nothing at work is bothering me - it just can't get through my priorities. It also means that I am not concentrating on the task set at our sessions. (24 August 2000)

I felt more positive about today - as if I learnt something about myself and gained more understanding of myself and my motivation. If I am to learn to change I need to learn that it is safe to express anger, but before that I need to learn what it is that makes me angry. I feel that nothing
makes me angry. Anything bad or unjust is just to be expected, it is nothing to be angry over. (7 September 2000)

I gained interesting insights into myself, as I think about things. I am amazed at how accurate the psychological assessments and interpretations appear to be. These insights do appear to be helping because I feel as if I'm coping better, but I still wonder if I am supposed to do more with these insights. Do they serve another purpose? (28 September 2000)

We seemed to have gone back to early days, but because of the work we had done previously we were able to deal more productively with it. (19 October 2000)

We missed HP5 and HP4 today. It was good to reflect on the strengths/skills developed over the previous weeks. You almost don't realise it's happening. (9 November 2000)

We revisited our feelings of powerlessness today, but really, today they were thoughts and reflections on powerlessness not personal feelings; we were more able to offer and plan solutions and therefore feeling less powerless perhaps. (16 November 2000)

For me, the responses of 7 September, 28 September and 9 November, 2000 express the impact of the design in a nutshell. Positive learning about self that is self-affirming has occurred, but it is also subtle and elusive. It is not clear how it might be applied to practice improvement. If there is something that does need to be addressed to undertake change (as expressing anger was identified for this participant), one of the difficulties is learning to recognise the nature and source of that embedded, or less consciously recognised, factor. That can happen, in time, as a result of slow and systematic attention to one’s reflective work. At least, that would be a summary of my learning from the process, and I see intimations of a similar experience here for this participant, and the whole pattern, or elements of it, is repeated for a significant number of the other participants to indicate that this is a potential general outcome of the process. What varies for each individual is how far the changes develop in the time available. One of the factors that appeared to limit such learning could be attributed to the level of stress from professional or personal sources that the individual was experiencing at the time.
6.7 Designer-Facilitator experience of change on these dimensions

I was all of designer, facilitator, participant, observer, teacher, learner, evaluator, inquirer, … in this project. As a participant, the question can be asked: was the process itself reflexive? – did I learn, and on the same dimensions that I was anticipating that the other participants would learn? The short answer is yes. Given that I was more ‘devoted’ to this task (had more time to attend to it, accessed more resources with this end in view) this was to be expected. I think it is also true to say that I learned more than the other participants. Indeed, a teacher often learns more of a topic by teaching it than the students in that teacher’s class learn from the teacher – it is a matter of attention, focus, relevance, significance (a teacher’s self-perception of, and need for competence, for instance). If I have experienced greater levels of learning than the other participants in the professional development activity case studies, then one of the sources of that additional learning came from being able to compare the responses of the two different groups.

A longer, detailed answer to did I learn?, and in the areas the project was aiming at?, can also be given in positive terms, but without adding a great deal to what has been said thus far. One observation that I did make, in gathering such material together, was that the evidentiary sources supporting claims of this learning, these changes for myself, is documented, for the most part, in forms other than the records associated with the enactment of the design with the two groups. It appears that when I was engaged in that activity my focal attention was fully engaged with the participants, the activity, and the evaluation of the design. But it was also that engagement which was ‘teaching’ me. As one participant has noted: ‘You almost don't realise it's happening’ (HP3, HPR-11/4).

I would summarise the details of the internalities of my experience with the design as having the following dimensions:

- I would claim that the greatest extent of learning occurred for my level of awareness about my self, and my self in practice.
  - As I shared the tools with the groups, and my awareness of how the tools helped me understand my thinking and acting, the capacity to talk about and observe differences in others, who were also working with
understanding their thinking and actions along the same dimensions, helped sharpen my own levels of self-awareness.

- At this stage I recognise this change as having happened mostly at a propositional and cognitive level. The boundaries of the descriptors became clearer for me; I had more sense of having a useful explanatory handle on what is going on for me in my interactions with others, of understanding what I am doing and how that reflects what is implied in the tool-based descriptors: I, N, T, J, NT, NTJ, INTJ, TOA, LOC, X-Y Human values.

- I began to have greater awareness of: if I was I-Introvert, how I was responding to other I-Introverts, and how I was responding to E-Extraverts; if I was N-Intuitive, how I understood S-Sensing types to be operating; if I was T-Thinking, how I was responding to other T-Thinking types, and F-Feeling types; if I was J-Judging how my responses might differ from those of P-Perceiving types.

- I began to be clearer about what was the ‘difference’ of the other, and how I might use that when in a group context, and when seeking to facilitate group processes. A particular insight that I have found most helpful was that of recognising the way different terms (‘feel’ and ‘think’, for instance) are used by different types to designate the reasoning and evaluation that informs decision-making, and consequently how I need to give space for such perceptions and processing to have equivalent merit to my own preference.

- Other perceptive changes developed, especially of what constituted reasonable expectations of this activity and process.

- At the level of affect, I was able to be more attentive to indicators of affect, notably affective discomfort, and by reflecting on it as soon as it manifested itself, on the assumption that something in the immediate past had stimulated such discomfort, I was able to capture instances of incongruent actions – Model I behaviour, and other unintentional activity that impacted on my potential effectiveness.
I anticipate that continuing to develop my self-awareness will provide leverage for further change, for further learning, and learning to change, in due course, given time and attention to the points of such leverage.

Reflecting on my awareness of self-awareness being important, and an important, potential source and site of change, I need to record that this has been a gradual process for me, and has really only been put to effective use since starting to use these tools in this way with others.

- I estimate my first exposure to self-awareness tools was in relation to work-related testing for stress risk in 1990. My second exposure was in relation to testing associated with identifying management potential and strengths in 1992. My third exposure was in the context of Dispute Resolution studies, 1996-1998. The difference at the third exposure was that additional cognitive input was provided of how self-awareness was significant in practice performance, even in an everyday activity like communication effectiveness. The cognitive input included work where the experiential expression of type differences was drawn out of actual contemporaneous class participation and responses.

- It was when I started using tools (gathered during Dispute Resolution studies and from the Whetten and Cameron material, to provide professional development inputs on stress management and management effectiveness, in 1997 and 1998) that I became more aware of their explanatory power, and what I could do about change for myself, in the light of those understandings. That is to say, like the participants to my professional development activity design, I was unable, at first, to make much use of this information; nor to see what implications it might have for capacity to change.

- It is the reflective work, on my observations of self, being more attentive to my thinking and actions, and working with these explanatory options which helps frame the connections of thinking and acting and cements a lived understanding of the descriptors so that they become more useful. Indeed, I am now of the view that reflection on self, using some sort of cognitive structure with its nominated categories as a testing or questioning tool, is a significant process in building such self-awareness. Its mode of operation appears to be that the
attention allows the person to unearth the embedded so that it can be seen and then matched, or not, with a nominated category. The process of testing one’s own activities and thinking against the descriptors of a nominated category helps clarify an individual’s boundaries and builds the extent of an individual’s comprehension of different aspects of self, and in a way that then allows for some questioning of assumptions implicit in the embedded and tacit. In addition, the process of expanding a participant’s vocabulary, in this area, can be described as providing an increase of categories for understanding and explanation. Increasing the categories available constitutes a development of ontology (Schön, 1991, p.349). Increasing cognitive complexity, represented by having additional categories, is associated with higher tolerance of ambiguity, and a capacity to gather more effective information about the environment associated with greater internal locus of control, and a resultant sense of comfortableness with change (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.76, 78). Some of the embedded aspects of my self in practice that were surfaced by this process, and which also tended to disappear from focal attention, included

- The strategic, the reflective, the evaluative, my agency in change, designing – aspects of what I call “doing what comes naturally”
- Values-in-use, and the role of values in learning to change
- Action learning

Also, like one of the other participants who had an established practice of written reflective work, I have become more aware of the value and necessity of moving my reflective work from the post-activity, the private, and the written form, to the contemporaneous, the public, and the oral form, in order to make my thinking available for others for (1) checking the thinking, and (2) allowing the insights, if confirmable, to be available for others to work with, to see if the outputs of such thinking can help us delve more effectively into the nature of our practice knowledge. I now have sharing reflective insights, and working on practice anecdotes for sharing as intentional action targets for change of my practice.

- The process was reflexive. The subject (me) was also impacted by the process as an object. The process worked for me as a learning activity, and on each of
the dimensions where learning, some difference arising from change, was intended.

6.8 Participants’ perspectives on design effectiveness

While the focus on assessing the effectiveness of the professional development design up until now has been of how I am reading the signs, and for the design-related criteria I identified, I also needed to consider any alternative views, if available. All participants have their own expectations, and they also have their own standards for evaluating any professional development activity. At times the participants expressed a view about this activity, using their own in-practice criteria for ‘professional development’. I was able to be alert to some of this, and it offered an independent view, as recipients, of the effectiveness of the professional development activity. Some of the expressed views were able to be used, by me, in-practice, for reconsidering design elements of the activity delivery. From the participants’ own evaluative criteria for professional development, the activity was judged to have been successful. Using a variation on my ‘continuation’ criterion (busy professionals will devote time to what is of value), the fact that the participants continued to engage with the process, over the time, indicated some of its effectiveness for them. Amongst the evaluative comments made about the design, and from the ABE participants particularly, no specific suggestions were made about how else to improve the activity, beyond the aspects of timing and continuity – items, in-practice, beyond their control and mine.

6.8.1 Participants’ end-of-session reflections

The personal, end-of-session reflections material often contained evidence of these personal evaluations. Most evaluations were positive, indicating the activity was appreciated. Many of these evaluations have been indicated in the material presented under the previous categories in Chapters 6.1-6.6.

For the ABE participants, their professional activity was delivery of developmental material and activity to TAFE students, adults. Consequently their evaluations were especially pertinent, and were likely to provide ‘external’ inputs for my own practice. In their structured end-of-session reflections they often used the heading ‘Change’ to register this kind of evaluation. One of the themes that came through in this area was
that of time: the time provided for these inputs was appreciated, but participants also reported feeling rushed and that more time was needed with the new inputs to develop understanding and consolidate the learning. This evaluation led to me adjusting expectations and process for the CNHS group.

The dilemma of time, of pacing and continuity, especially in relation to other practice and life demands, was expressed by a number of the participants. As one remarked: ‘I want it both ways. Quicker to allow continuity and better understanding – but more time for thought and be able to absorb more’ (EP1).

For the CNHS participants, their evaluation focused on the positive (or less than positive) context formed in the group and session, and the way the tools and discussion contributed to their understanding. HP1’s responses were indicative of the experience for the group: (1) the space for sharing and the new inputs was appreciated from the beginning, however (2) not all sessions were completely successful, and (3) particular sessions were important for reasons that were considered beyond the boundaries of what might be the usual expectations of a professional development activity.

6.8.2 Participants’ in-session interactions

For the ABE group, apart from positive comments about the impact of tools, evaluative comments came in the sessions where I was more engaged in observing and tracking dialogue or had the audio transcript. The form of those sessions shifted ground from the previous sessions, but most responses of an evaluative nature came in response to my querying of how things were going and where were we up to, what was the difference that my inputs had made. The responses indicated the project was meeting their needs and some of this has been reported earlier in Chapter 5.2.7, and if the responses had indicated otherwise, I would have been duty bound to explore what was not working for them, and to have made some sort of responsive adjustment from within my mobilisable tool kit, or agree to discontinue wasting their time.

For the CNHS group the evaluative comments came in a number of ways, in response to a number of different cues. The progress with the program with the CNHS group was challenged by me on a number of key occasions, and participants’ responses were
noted. On other occasions the comments came unsolicited. On some occasions participants actively gave me the floor to bring on some of my inputs. (Since I was being more responsive than I was with ABE, getting such an opening was important, and indicated that they appreciated that I might have something to contribute). Sometimes a participant’s initiative, or response, directed where the group’s focus turned in the session, indicating to me that they were actively looking for particular elements of what the program offered. Overall, the appreciation was that the activity had delivered positive changes for them and some of that has been detailed in Chapter 5.3.7.

A number of occasions arose in both groups when questions were asked about the effectiveness of the process in the form of: Was what I was getting from them meeting my needs? Such a query indicated to me, at least, that while I was responding with material that they appreciated, they were not as clear about what I was about, or what I was needing in the way of ‘research data’. My response on those occasions was that what happened in the group was the data that I needed, and it was my responsibility to make what was to be made of that.

In two instances participants were actively comparing my design with other professional development activities. In the pre-session time of one of the ABE interviews, EP1 compared my design with another professional development activity that she was engaging in concurrently, and commented to the effect that mine was more saleable. In one of the CNHS sessions HP5 indicated that the inputs from the design had brought together concepts from other management training inputs and made sense of them for her – given it a coherence, given it applicability.

6.8.3 Evidence from the ABE interviews

For the ABE group, when formally wrapping the professional development activity in the third interview, I questioned about the impact of the professional development activity – was there anything from the earlier material that had stayed with them or had been found to be useful during the action learning experience? All five recognised something of particular value to them. I would note, however, that I am personally uncomfortable with placing too much reliance on these findings, as an indicator of the success of the design, since it needed that kind of question, and given the participants’
earlier frame of wanting to help me in my research, the responses could be considered to be socially responsive reciprocity.

Since EP1 was the participant who, in effect, engaged me to undertake this process of professional development with her staff team, the evaluative interchange was extended, and could be considered to be feedback concerning a contractual arrangement. EP1 saw the process as the necessary stimulus for the team to take action on marketing. She noted that there were times when she was not sure that we were actually working on task, but the results were what she was after. The time devoted to the task was considered significant. The equipping of the team was important, and what we did accomplished that. When we focused on what was delivered and what was not delivered, the validity of the process was recognised. Indeed, the recognition was in mutual terms, and of the implicit paradox of what we are working with. I am more comfortable with relying on these remarks since (1) they were cast in the frame of earlier comments (EINT-314/261-270) about getting feedback from another concerning an unsuccessful negotiation, to get information about the kinds of things that would be needed win a contract, (2) these earlier comments were remembered and referred to within this conversation (EINT-331/293), and (3) there was probably a little more equity in the relationship arising from (a) our longer-standing pre-project relationship as peers with common professional interests and (b) the nature of my obligations to EP1 to reciprocate for the access to the group that made the inquiry possible. The transcript of the exchanges recorded:

(EINT-331/233-246, 4 October 2000)
Dianne: A couple of other questions I've got for you, … I've wondered from time to time whether I was meeting your expectations. So have you got some feedback to me about what I've been doing and what you were looking for, and whether they've actually met?
EP1: Well I think we all feel that if we hadn't done this with you we never would have got underway or we wouldn't have got to the place that we're at the moment and the feeling of knowing that we can do it, so you've given us that. I will admit that at times I wasn't a 100% sure where we were going or whether we were shaping up to be of use to your project, we just hoped we were. In taking time to discuss things has helped to bring us together, well spend time just looking at where we were up to and what we were doing. We feel we've come a long way and we certainly hope that it has been worthwhile for you.
Dianne: I think it has been worthwhile for me.

(EINT-331/289-292)
Dianne: Coming back to did you … a part of the point of the question was: were there things that you particularly wanted from me, that in your opinion I did not deliver on?
EP1: Well to be quite honest I was hoping you would give more direction on how to work within a company, but I realise that's not your way. [chuckle] …

(297-330) I suppose when we started out I wanted to be told how to, and how you saw it happen, but you didn't allow us that luxury, you made us move out ourselves and I suppose it's the discovery part of it and work it out and work our way through it. I suppose in many ways I'm quite lazy … I like to be taught, I like someone to lay it out for me and let me have a look and I accept what I'm happy to accept and have a go with but that was not what the project was about. So I don't mean that critically in any way it's just...
Dianne: It helps for me to get a clear statement from you about what your expectations were, because, in a sense, we didn't negotiate that clearly at the beginning.
EP1: No.
Dianne: There's in a sense in which we've had an ongoing negotiation, you and I, and me and the group, about what it is that we're doing with this time out. Whether it's my research project or your marketing project, it's sort of neither here nor there; in a sense we've been playing with negotiation skills.
EP1: Yes we have and … when I say that that is not your way, I accept that … and I realise that is just the way it is.
Dianne: And you now realise that because I didn't do that you've actually had other gains.
EP1: Yes and it was the point of it all, I know, … in telling you that I'm sure you realise that that wasn't how it was meant to be and I understand that. It was just that I hoped that I'd have one two three four steps …
Dianne: We all do that.
EP1: And that's the magic of it, you'll be right.
Dianne: I’d like one two three four statements that comply with my research project and have it come out.
EP1: Well that's it.

(EINT-331/400-411)
Dianne: But that's not necessarily when it comes to the question of confidence and self efficacy, which is what I think has been the gain of what I did do and what I didn't do, it's not necessarily what I thought of it. Being spoon fed doesn't force you to push yourselves.
EP1: Yes that's right.
Dianne: Are we talking about adult education or are we talking about what?
EP1: Yes that's right. And so we do it to our students, but no one's allowed to do it to us.
Contributing to Learning to Change

For participants EP2 and EP5 the positive developments were recognised at both the personal and at the action learning project level. For EP4, the engagement with the material on reflection, and the group discussions, was seen to have prepared her for the change in professional culture as she moved from one agency to another during the course of the project. The preparation meant that EP4 was able to tap the value of the peer supervision discussions more readily than would have been the case if she had not experienced the project inputs. EP3 struggled to recognise any explicit development. Part of that struggle appeared to be that what was being asked for, in requiring explicit reflective work for practice improvement, involved attending to the in-action, instantaneous decision-making that is needed in-practice, and which had tended to become more and more implicit. The task of working on that, to work with it explicitly, for my research objectives, required more time than was available, and warrantable, in the prevailing circumstances where this kind of debriefing was available with a peer, team teacher, and so, in practice terms, more timely and effective. So far as I was able to gauge, the interviews did provide a forum that extended such considerations, and she commented at the August group discussion (EGRP/799-826):

EP3: But sometimes I think we … do things and they're so much a part of us that we don't see it, do you know what I mean? It's like we go into a classroom or we negotiate in a workplace or whatever and when you say to us, what skills did you use or how did you do it, we're sort of thinking oh oh and it's like making something that's so much a part of us with trying to make it more explicit [other affirmations] and I think for me we've done a lot of that, sort of looking at how do you go about it, you've sort of come in and you've said ok you do this, how do you do it and you sort of think oh, [laugh] let me think [laugh] and you start to see what's going on in the process and that sort of thing and I honestly think sometimes those things become so natural to us that we ??? what we're doing or it's so much a part of our philosophy or whatever.

EP2: But it's like when you try and write down all the steps of a procedure you leave out half of them

EP3: Exactly, And I see Dianne that was one of her roles, one or your roles was to recognise the process rather than the big picture. I don't know if people agree with that but I got that from the sessions that it was very much what reflection, reflecting on how it went and as EP2 said thinking about steps or thinking about whatever it was like skills.

EP2: [it is] effortless. That just shows that it's been well done. [other affirmation]
Summary – Design effectiveness

Overall, as a practitioner, I have been satisfied during this inquiry that the design had merit, and for accomplishing the purposes that were intended. While the changes intended were recognised and recognisable, they were also subtle and expressed with a richness of contextual and additional information about their nature which was not covered by the simple categories identified when considering how to evaluate the design. The process of analysing data, and compiling it in this chapter, has exposed some of that richness which might well have dissipated in practice. If it is recognised in practice it is probably recognised at another synthesised level, since the quantity is almost unmanageable. The synthesised form may well be derived from the kinds of tacit evaluations that occur in practice.

I was looking for evidence that the design worked, and on the dimensions intended. The collected evidence shows that self-awareness and other-awareness were developed, and this development appeared to contribute to the development of the internal group context, and to a level that was evaluated, by the participants, to have increased the group capacity to provide peer support. The evidence indicated that the process assisted participants to collect some of their thinking data, but provided less clear evidence of precisely what else they did with that data. Most participants reported appreciating the work on the thinking, and the majority reported self-assessment of change on that dimension of their practice. Indeed, of all the activity involved in the professional development design, the consensus of the participants, from the variety of evidence available, was that the work on thinking had generated change for them, and certainly at the level of being more aware of the nature of their thinking. I was unable to identify any instances that indicated that the kind of robust critique of practice thinking that is needed to make significant changes in practice had occurred in the open group context.

The project timeframe limitations seemed to preclude the testing of the actual level of peer support, and evidence of the development of the internal group context to the point where robust critical inquiry into professional practice issues was seen to be sustained, was not observed. The participants did keep coming to the group sessions. If the group had not been providing adequate sustenance at that basic level other professional
demands were sufficient to have meant that the program could have folded, and done so for good external reasons, without questioning the effectiveness of the program. Some responses indicated that some participants, at some stages, made particular efforts to be with the group, and presumably for the benefits of the group activity as they had experienced it.

Later, in Chapter 7.2, I comment on the extent to which my inputs may or may not have contributed to the development of the internal group context of robust and critical inquiry into professional practice issues. I also think the literature supports the requirement of more time than was available in this inquiry (to develop such a context and to test its operational resilience), to be able to make a more informed conclusion about the effectiveness or otherwise of the present action design. If the ‘two-day’ benchmark, raised by one of the CNHS participants, was any indication of less effective group process, then the materials used with the groups allowed them to reach and exceed that standard.

My ‘pragmatic’ evaluative criterion – of the group deciding and resourcing itself to continue beyond my engagement, because they valued the inputs available from a peer-support action-learning group – was not met. The design is not that compelling!

It would appear that the implications of these findings are that the use of publicly available self-awareness tools, which help participants address elements of their thinking-action in interpersonal interactions, contributes to their ability to learn more from and in a group context. The use of such self-awareness tools need not be restricted to the first stages of a group’s formation, but if they are part of the first stages of a group’s formation they appear to assist develop the kind of supportive structure that enhances the sharing of vulnerabilities and the development of trust that allows for sensitive practice issues to become available to group scrutiny.

The evaluation of the level of reflective work, the review of thinking, and action learning stimulated by the professional development activity, to be able to conclude that it was generated by the design, was clouded by my increasing recognition of indications of participants’ usual practice.
The evidence presented in Chapter 5 and to be explored next in Chapter 8.3 appeared to show that the sense of efficacy and confidence did lead to taking action. The action stimulated was in areas where some resistance, or sense of powerlessness, had existed before the professional development activity was undertaken, and success in such action reinforced confidence in efficacy.

The only evidence captured of the participants’ review of any designing of an intended action and its associated thinking, and its in-action testing to take them into another round of considering assumptions in their thinking-action complex was in the case of the participant with a long-term journaling practice and in my own self-study.
7 DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION AND FACILITATION

Overview

In this chapter the focus is on the design in-practice. The evaluation focus is on its implementation as a professional development activity. The questions in view are: How did its overall enactment work out in-practice? How were the designed tools actually used? To what extent did the facilitator’s capacities in-practice impact on the participants’ possible experience? How do I, as facilitator, understand the implications of these outcomes?

7.1 Intentional design compared with outcomes – Overall enactment

In looking at the relationship between design intention and in-practice outcomes, the focus in this section is on how the enactment of the design compared with the planned implementation where the role of context and time are significant factors.

7.1.1 Framing – Interaction of design with context

The framing of the engagement, as an outsider research project, was two-edged. On the one hand it provided status and respectability and permitted the program to be implemented. Both the organisational support for the program and the presence and role of the external agent, the facilitator, were seen to be significant factors in its effectiveness. On the other hand, this framing also limited the participants’ capacity to consider continuing beyond the initial negotiated frame, on their own account. The process, especially the setting aside of time to engage with the process, was apparently not theirs to own.

The following interchange, recorded at the ABE group session of 10 August 2000, encapsulates some of this predicament:
Having described to the group what I thought had happened over the period of the intervention (EGRP/520-597) I then posed the following: ‘The question for me is: why couldn't you 'do that on your own’?’

(EGRP/630):

EP2: Because you made us sit down and do it that's why (639)

EP4: [you] Actually instigated a co-ordinated approach which wasn't happening before. (662)

EP5: Well we could never pin ourselves down could we? (665)

EP4: You brought us together as a group specifically to work on that. (673)

EP5: The time was allocated. I mean we have a hard enough time just trying to keep together for an ice cream. (676)

EP1: We'd have to be very, very firm with ourselves because it is very easy to find, well, EP2's on class, EP4's not here today, I'm out somewhere, EP5's at a meeting. (684)

EP4: Well it's a commitment, I guess like our students we expect them to commit to what's happening in there, the same in an action learning process for us, whether we are really committed or not to do it and if you are, well then the time and the other things come from that. Whether it's prioritised. (713-716)

EP1: But time is a real problem and we asked for funding, what do they call it, seed funding, so that we could have time together, however, TAFE makes it very difficult in that we've got to explain this, we've got to explain that (761)

EP5: We wouldn't have done it in our normal week (772)

7.1.2 Logistics – Interaction of design with time and context

The exigencies of day-to-day operations were anticipated to have some impact on session attendance. The arranging of sessions was designed to enable all participants to attend all sessions (or as many as possible). In-practice, the disruption experienced was more than anticipated.

In the ABE group the demands of operational responsibilities meant that no single participant was in attendance at all sessions, for all the time. No participant missed more than four hours all told, but only one third of the group sessions had all five participants in attendance for the bulk of the session. Three sessions were postponed, one was cancelled because of industrial action, and the rescheduling of intended sessions to a later date meant a loss of continuity for the focus of the group discussion.

In the CNHS group, pre-determined leave arrangements had a more significant impact, with only three out of the 14 sessions (including the first without-prejudice session) having the whole group convened at the one time. One participant was able to be at all
sessions, except one. Three participants missed three sessions, and one participant missed five sessions. Such leave arrangements were recognised when the agreement to ‘proceed forthwith’ was made at the initial meeting, and alternative arrangements were made to deal with the potential dislocation. Time was provided, outside of the scheduled sessions, for the absent members to be brought up to date by undertaking any input self-awareness exercises, and by being briefed on the basic outcomes of the discussions held in their absence.

For the CNHS group, in addition to the foreshadowed absences, and unanticipated apologies and absences, unexpected calls and other individual distractions impacted on the effective participation of individuals from time to time, and the incompleteness of the group at times was also perceived to limit the group’s potential. Participant end-of-session reflections capturing these issues included

HP1: Today had been rather disruptive regarding continuity and it's been difficult to maintain clear thinking. (3 August 2000);
HP2: Found it a little difficult to concentrate to-day, because of many other external factors which appear to be clouding my judgment at this time. (24 August 2000);
HP5: Now 30/8/00. As I reflect - most of the time - I disengaged and reflected on my level because of all that was going on for me externally - clients dying, breaking legs, L.V. physical things, phone interruptions CRS/REPDS challenge, etc, etc (24 August 2000);
HP1: Today I am disrupted in my thinking & perception by extraneous factors. (28 September 2000);
HP4: Good meeting. Took a while to get the "baggage" we were carrying, out of the way (19 October 2000);
HP3: We missed HP5 and HP4 today (9 November 2000);
HP1: Today I do feel as if we've wasted time. We didn't have to unwind and therefore have not actually managed to progress far enough to plan the next steps. Maybe it is difficult without all who had particular areas of interest not being present (9 November 2000);
HP1: Today emphasized the value of the group being most effective when closer to complete. HP2's absence meant certain issues still could not be totally covered. (16 November 2000)

The experience of the project was that on the day, other organisational constraints can, and do, get priority. The capacity for the ‘urgent’ to crowd out the ‘important’ is a significant issue in the management of stress in the workplace. Whetten and Cameron make specific provision for developing more appropriate thinking-action responses for practitioners to deal with this aspect of work life (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.119-121). (See also Chapter 8.2 for a more detailed discussion of stress as an additional
theme in the findings for the inquiry). At the level of the research project, it limited continuity for individuals and for the groups as a group. I was aware of such an impact and it informed my expectations and activities, and other participants also became aware of it as a constraint. The extended passage of time between some sessions meant that the micro-detail of a subtle session interaction was difficult to follow up, and so progress with the process was not at an optimum level.

These limitations raise issues for any research effort, particularly when the research effort includes a group convening to progress its operation. The capacity to be engaged in systematic inquiry is constrained when it needs to be sustained over an extended period. The capacity to remain focused on a particular aspect under investigation is limited. The capacity to undertake the cohesive understanding work required to engage in model making, and to go further, to be able to conduct the second-order, meta-level evaluation of any such model so formed, which Argyris speaks of as a significant component of inquiry and its capacity to deliver desired outcomes (Argyris, 1993, p.253), is likewise limited. The effectiveness of the peer group, in delivering support, as an ongoing commitment, is reduced. In the case of working with reflective material, these constraints highlight the importance of documenting reflective work, and contemporaneously, if progress is to occur.

7.1.3 Time as a component of the design

Time, especially the competition between time to undertake reflective work, and the other obligations of practice, was one of the overarching concerns that I brought to the inquiry (see Chapter 2.5). The dilemma is not easily resolved. Any activity to generate improvement will require time. The question of whether reflective activity is better than others in that regard, needs to be answered firstly at the level of appropriateness, secondly at the level of effectiveness, and only lastly, when both those evaluations are settled in the affirmative, does the question of efficiency have any relevance.

Time was recognised as a significant component of the design (see Chapter 3.2.4). Time was also recognised by the participants as having a significant impact on the capacity to incorporate new learning into practice understanding (see Chapter 6.8). The
evidence, from the comparison of intent and implementation, was that despite the
awareness of its significance, the provision of time, to the various activities of the
design, especially reflective work and more exploration of thinking, and thinking-action
analysis, was not sufficient to allow a full enactment of the design’s components to be
able to evaluate its potential effectiveness.

What was instructive from the participants’ response to the design was that all
appreciated the time devoted to the personal, the self-awareness. Indeed, the CNHS
group made a conscious choice to continue with the personal self-development material
when that option was presented against an alternative to focus in more depth on
organisational professional issues (see detail in Chapter 5.3.7.1). Although the learning
from self-awareness was subtle, it was appreciated, and the participants, by choosing the
personal as their priority recognised it as having a greater value than other alternatives
on this occasion.

7.1.4 Sequencing of inputs in the group sessions
The design anticipated working with a certain sequence of inputs and focusing on
practice issues and action changes after those inputs were in place. It became clear,
from my experience of implementing the design with the ABE group, that grouping the
inputs, and endeavouring to deal with them quickly so that practice concerns could be
addressed, was counter-productive. The process was changed with the CNHS group, to
the extent that focusing on practice issues came to the fore, and applying the inputs
occurred more gradually. Such a change did not appear to substantially limit the
effectiveness of the design. Indeed, as noted at Chapter 6.2.3, in one instance this
difference in the enactment of the design appeared to enhance the effectiveness of the
design. My thinking, about the design, was able to move from a structured presentation
form to a more responsive guidelines form.

7.1.5 Overlapping experience of the same process in different contexts
The circumstances of the implementation of the design included an overlap between the
commencement of the project with the CNHS group and the completion of the process
with the ABE group. As a result, I was able to conduct some informal processing and
interpreting of the data from the group interactions, comparing the two groups.
Consequently, I discerned an apparent ‘response’ pattern occurring with both groups
(what I call ‘a paradox associated with meta-process’, see details in Chapter 8.6). I was able to seek feedback about my interpretation of what was going on in the ABE group, from the group, in the August session, and no-one mounted any substantive dissent. The CNHS group was never complete enough, at an appropriate stage, to do a similar testing of my interpretation, although in one instance an individual participant did allude to part of her experience of the design in terms that I interpreted as similar to my own. The timing of the allusion, when I recorded that ‘HP4 noticed that what was going on in the relationship building with clients through the assessment process was what was going on in this group’, probably helped confirm the relevance and the validity of the insight for me.

7.2 Intentional design compared with outcomes – Enacting the inputs

Again comparing the enacted design with the intention, this section focuses on the particulars of the inputs: how they varied in availability, timing and use, in the two groups. I look at what were the implications of the similarities and differences for the participants and what the outcomes show about my capacity to enact the intended design.

I have indicated that the experience of implementing the design with one group suggested a change in implementation with the second group. Similarly, the experience of a session with a group would suggest a responsive development of intentions in the design for the next session of that group, compared with the pre-program generated schedule of activities. I adjusted my micro-intentions in the light of experience and further thinking about what was involved, taking into account what resources I had at my disposal to meet the specific needs of the two groups. Such adjusting responsiveness is usual practice for a competent and professional teacher or facilitator, and is sometimes called ‘action research’, or ‘reflective practice’, by others. It is adjusting responsiveness, and openness to variation, that moves in-practice inquiry of facilitation, and many other professional practices, into a mode of inquiry that needs to be different from the traditional dominant empirical model.
7.2.1 **Inputs for the development of self- and other-awareness**

The inputting of the materials on self- and other-awareness was accomplished. The timing however varied from initial intentions, and for the CNHS group the variation was a response to my experience of the use of these tools with the ABE group, where the consolidation of the inputting, and the timetable, was considered to be too rushed to gain what was potentially available from the use of the tools. Similarly, the key tools of MBTI, TOA, LOC, and X-Y Values, were used with both groups. Additional tools were used with each group, and the variations were responsive to the group’s expressed interests.

7.2.2 **Inputs for the development of the internal group context**

A number of aspects contributed to the context of the group interactions and affected whether a safe environment was established and maintained. The first aspect was the level of openness able to be reached. The level of openness available to the group was worked on by the use of the self- and other-awareness material in the group context, and was made more explicit to the group by using the Johari window as a conceptual explanation (see Glossary). The second aspect was the impact from the ‘leadership’ – in the first instance from the facilitator, in the second instance from the participants in the group, whoever took the lead in the group, or on an issue. It is here that unintentional actions are likely to have most impact. The evidence, in these case studies, suggests that, as a facilitator, I still have much to learn about dealing with the unintentional, but well-socialised, behaviours that are so counterproductive in learning in a group context, before I will be able to provide a consistent alternative model for action.

7.2.3 **Inputs for working on the thinking-action complex**

The inputs on the thinking-action complex were delivered, but without as much intention-enactment directness as the other two inputs. The records show less work, from the facilitation end, on the preparatory thinking about and design of ways to make inputs on the thinking-action complex explicit. While written reflective work was mobilised from the first formal session on, it was some time before I recognised the nature of oral reflective work outside of a structured brainstorm, or some other structured device. Also, when the ABE sessions changed from my formal inputting to
more group directed discussion, the formal end-of-session reflective work was overlooked, and not reinstated at other group sessions, or in the context of the interview process. Engagement in examining thinking was expected to develop naturally when looking at practice issues. It occurred naturally, but the absence of explicit design, to encourage its development from present levels to more powerful levels, limited progress. The action learning component was to be developed by the focus on new actions to address practice issues. The major action learning that occurred has been reported in Chapters 5.2.7 and 5.3.7. However, any explicit intentional capacity to focus on action learning, and make explicit the changes in it, as a process, was rudimentary and yielded limited results as reported in Chapter 6.6. Indeed, it was my experience that the action learning component frequently disappeared from my intentional observation (see note at Figure 4-1). It would appear that action learning is another of my embedded and tacit practices.

7.3 Reflective work – Learning from the experience

7.3.1 Preparation
As I came into this study I had a number of views about reflective work, and working with reflective work to improve practice, that were formed, for the most part, by my engagement with the literature. I was looking to use the written process to capture my thinking, in order to be able to review it, and I was encouraging other practitioners to do the same, as a first step to improving practice (Allen, 1998). Such a focus tended to privilege a view of reflective work that was limited to the written form.

One of the overarching objectives of this investigation sought to respond to Kressel’s challenge (Kressel, 1997, pp.149-150, 155-158) to see if a reflective protocol might be developed which would streamline the process by identifying how to focus on significant practice issues, and which, by being 'systematic', would increase its capacity to develop valid information. Consequently, I had collected pro-formas of structures to facilitate reflective work (Brookfield, 1995; Collingwood & Collingwood, 1995; Dick, 2000a; Fook, 1996; Jones, 1998; Kressel, 1997; Morrison, 1996; Power, 1992; Smyth, 1996; Tripp, 1993; Whetten & Cameron, 1995; Young-Eisendrath, 1996).
During the gathering of that material I noticed suggestions of other forms of undertaking reflective work – for instance: co-counselling, debriefing (Knights, 1985; Pearson & Smith, 1985). In these forms structure was still significant (Kressel, 1997). For the purposes of ‘research’, criteria of evidence (documentary form of some sort) and criteria of process (persistence with systematic study, and analysis) tend to privilege the emphasis on the written and the structured form.

I had also gathered the view that not all people engage in reflective work with the same facility, or to the same extent (Boud et al., 1985; Ferry & Ross-Gordon, 1998; King & Kitchener, 1994). The material about self-awareness and personality type tended to reinforce this perception (Myers & Hartzler, 1997; Norton, 1997; Whetten & Cameron, 1995).

The usual form of reflective work, in a formal educational context, is structured individual work at the end of a session (eg (Brookfield, 1995; Loughran, 1996)). On occasions the results are gathered and provide participant responses and evaluations that constitute feedback for the presenter (Brookfield, 1995). In some situations, the presenter provides an opening for formally sharing those reflections at the commencement of the next session (Brookfield, 1995). Again, in formal educational contexts such an activity can be considered to be recapitulation of previous work, focusing attention on progress to date, and raising issues that frame the next round of educational inputs and activity.

In the course of the inquiry these literature-formed views about reflective work were subject to considerable challenge, both from my own experience of working with a more intentional focus on written reflections, and by my observations of the implementation of this aspect of the design with the participants.

**7.3.2 Practice – Application of initial facilitator’s understanding**

In the implementation of focusing on reflective work in the professional development activity design, I had two key strategies: the use of different reflective pro-formas for structured personal reflection; and my prior experience of facilitating and coordinating group brainstorming and decision-making processes, and acting as scribe for group
interactions. In the professional development activity design, time was allowed for reflective work. Structure was offered to stimulate reflective work. Time was set aside for in-session reflection as well as end-of-session reflection. Opportunities were provided for individual work and group work.

For the ABE group, the structuring of the end-of-session reflections used the headings: ‘enjoyed’; ‘useful’; ‘what I would change’; ‘any other remarks’. In time, a couple of the participants found their written reflections tending to be more fluid than limiting their responses to these set headings. This structure, together with two other alternatives: (1) ‘reaction’/ ‘elaboration’/ ‘contemplation’, and (2) ‘surprise’/ ‘undisclosed’/ ‘discomfort’/ ‘elusive’, was offered to the CNHS group. The CNHS group responded by using a more open structure for the end-of-session written reflections.

A second form of reflective work, for a group context, focused on one area of the participants’ experience. Participants were directed to jot down individual written notes capturing basic incident details about the practice concern being focused on – who/ what /when /where – to prompt the recollection. The next step directed some evaluation of the previous experience, focusing on good and bad treatments of the same sort of issue, or some other polar dichotomy relevant to the issue. The available, open collective experience was then gathered by group brainstorming. For the two illustrative case studies I operated as recorder of the group brainstorming, using a whiteboard or flip chart to gather, document, and expose ‘corporate’ information on issues. Copies were made of these records, in a landscape diagrammatic form, for ongoing reference from session to session, if required.

For the ABE group, a structured reflection was conducted on 9 December 1999 for ‘What is Negotiation?’ and ‘What Knowledge Resources do we have about Negotiation?’; and later, on 15 August 2000, when the issue of confidence was explored. For the CNHS group, structured reflections were prepared for ‘Saying No’, 23 June 2000, and applied to the testing the resolve to proceed with the CNC Forum as a group action project, 6 July 2000. Other structured reflections were conducted (1) for the comparison between good and bad groups to work up norms for group culture for
the revamped CNC Forum, 6 July 2000; and (2) for reviewing the group’s focus and
direction in the latter part of the program, 24 August 2000.

From most of my attempts to provide space for written reflections and review, in-
session, it was apparent that both groups, as groups, were generally more comfortable
with talking-things-out as their reflective work. My explanation of the preference for
talking-things-out would be twofold. Firstly, from the MBTI preference explanatory
frame, the predominance of Es in the two groups meant that talking-things-out is
preferred over writing-things-down. Secondly, the fact that they were convened as
groups meant they could choose to make the most of having access to others, therefore
they were not comfortable with engaging in quiet, written and unshared reflective work.
It was my mindset that was looking for the written, singular, reflective work. I needed
to both recognise Dick’s material on alternative ways of going about reflective work
(Dick, 1998), and develop mechanisms to utilise the alternatives with the groups.

In the CNHS group, in one of the later sessions, a review of both the individual’s end-
of-session reflections and the group’s in-session brainstorming records that had been
generated to that point, was undertaken (24 August 2000). The intent of this activity
was to use these items as informational sources, to revisit expressed concerns and to see
if the participants found that focusing on an aspect of particular, recurrent concern,
would deal with the sense of ‘stuckness’ that had developed in the previous session.
Part of the process involved reviewing the reflections using another structure: the ‘most
important’/ ‘surprise’/ ‘discomfort’/ ‘self-censored’ grid.

For the CNHS group, De Bono’s 6 Hats process was used with some of the later
brainstorming, in an endeavour to move the open thinking that was available and
captured, into some of the more personally sensitive areas (19 October 2000 and 9
November 2000). What became noticeable with the structured group reflective work
was that the level of analysis implied by using De Bono’s 6 Hats requires more time
than is usually devoted to such open thinking processes. The first exposure to the 6
Hats, or any other tool, also includes time to work with the different concepts and
explain the elements of the different hats or the relevant tool. With practice at using the
technique, the participants could be quicker. De Bono and others also point out that it
is the lack of work with thinking, for instance using a systematic structured process, like
the 6 hats or a 4 quadrant analysis for a conflict situation, that usually limits our effectiveness (Boulle, 1996; Charlton & Dewdney, 1995; DeBono, 1991; Moore, 1986).

Over the course of the conduct of the professional development activity I noticed two patterns for the less-structured, oral, reflective work of the participants. In the ABE group one participant always opened her interaction in the next session with an illustration that indicated some of her reflective work on a key element of the past session as it had impacted on her. It took me a number of sessions to realise this, and even when I did, I did not realise it in a clear enough way to recognise its educative value: neither naming it as oral reflective work nor making it a formal component of our sessions together, which would have affirmed the process and inputs. In the CNHS group, reflective episodes could be characterised as ‘anecdotal round robins’. One participant would share something in an anecdote of practice experience. The remainder of the participants in the group would share an anecdote from their experience, focusing on the same issue. Again, it took me a while to recognise this ebb and flow of reciprocity. Again, because I was slow to recognise this, I also failed to affirm it as a reflective process, or to do any more work with the material shared in the instance, to see if the participants were able to identify any underlying concerns that merited further exploration.

7.3.3 Participants’ experience of reflective work – Change

Some participants had an established practice of recording reflective work, and were used to working with their thinking-acting in that way. They continued to find their processes effective. In one case, the professional development activity assisted the participant make the move from her predominantly written, private activity, to more open, oral sharing of the thinking. (See details in Chapters 6.4, 6.6, 6.8)

In cases where documenting reflective work and perhaps revisiting the documented material was a new experience, some participants admitted a growing awareness of the value of that as a part of their practice. (See details in Chapters 6.4, 6.6, 6.8)
For the participants, the level of reflective work did not appear to reach or was not stimulated enough by their experience to move to the level of intensity that I engaged in, and am able to report on as part of my self-study.

7.3.4 **Self-Study – Change or awareness developed**

I was personally challenged by the fact that I could not easily let go of my use of the structure offered to the ABE group (of 'enjoy', 'useful', 'change', 'any other') for some of my first-round session reflections when I moved to working with the CNHS group. I was not able to make that change even though I was not entirely satisfied with the categories offered to the ABE group and I offered options to the CNHS group. The barriers I recognised were: (1) becoming comfortable with the patterned routine of the structure; and, (2) my ‘resilient frame’ where my view of ‘scientific inquiry’ required that variables be controlled in order to isolate them, to simplify the situation, and to be able, consequently, to test the recognition of cause-and-effect relationships. By comparison, I was more able to adjust the facilitation design than I was able to adjust the inquiry-related structure, indicating some of the resilience of my inquiry frame.

In my own post-session reflective work, I used square brackets to identify my thinking recorded in the session observation material and I added another category ‘analytical’ for the more hypothetical inputs as I engaged in meaning making and considering facilitation design options and implications of incidents. As time went by I also began using my personal learning prompts as part of the analytical structure. In other words, I added to my categories of reflective work in preference to evaluating my reflective work, and making a choice on the basis of effectiveness.

---

8 My personal learning prompts were: ‘surprise’ (from Dewey); ‘undisclosed self-censoring’ (from Argyris and Schön); ‘discomfort’ (to capture indications of possible affect for me); and ‘elusive’ (to capture an indicator of in-action processing, the kind of ‘peripheral’ understanding and/or idea that is not quite in the middle of attentive focus). The first three were developed in July-August 1999, as I prepared to engage in mediation study observations. ‘Elusive’ was added in April 2000.
My experience of more intentional work on reflection, and thinking data, and thinking data in relation to action and effectiveness, led to a growth in quantity of material and the issue of quality of reflective material then arose. Demands, in the literature, for more ‘critical’ reflective work, made me more aware of the role of the ‘descriptive’. In-practice I found I could not afford to skimp on the descriptive since it was the descriptive that held the contextual detail that provided relevance to any of my analytical or critical developments from it. To manage quantity and quality for my practice it was a matter of being selective: determining when, and on what issues, to undertake the more intensive and intentional work (Marshall, 2001, p.433). Determining and reviewing current learning targets was and will be part of that ongoing practice.

The experience also led to an increased understanding (self-awareness) of the nature of my reflective work: the predominant form that was more than description involved questioning. The questioning operated at two levels: starting to expose hypothetical implications developed from my explanatory understanding, or recognising possible connections with other issues or incidents – both association and abduction. My experience also allowed me to identify a number of other embedded and tacit elements of my practice, and to begin the process of enunciating the nature of those elements as a first step to interrogating their effectiveness. Elements of practice that surfaced from this process included designing, evaluation, the role of action in evaluating learning. I was also able to recognise the capacity of reflective work to assist in the improvement of my facilitation practice by providing data on the subtle and the contextual in a way that did not exist in my previous practice.

### 7.3.5 Review of design, based on experience of its implementation

As noted thus far, my experience of the implementation of the design suggests a number of areas where, when implementing the design again, I can improve on my current practice. One such improvement in dealing with the development of reflective work will be to provide a structure for reflective work, and offer alternative reflective structures, occasionally, but in an explicit and progressive way. In regard to the question of a suitable protocol to streamline reflective work, posed by Kressel, the short answer is that I have not yet found one. Further, I have found almost any structure to
be useful. Using others’ structures forces me to think in areas different from my own initial focus. Staying with a structure for a time allows for the kind of focusing that assists pattern making. Using another structure, from time to time, refreshes enthusiasm for reflective work, and sometimes by unearthing a different focus, or suggesting another pattern. In addition, my experience of this inquiry suggests that for the individual the design of the structure needs to be directed to individual learning objectives. If this is so, then each collaborative or cooperative group will probably find that they need to (1) work at designing a structure that accurately expresses their current concerns as a group, and (2) revisit that structure from time to time to evaluate progress and reconsider priorities to keep it relevant. The designing process will help them identify their current, most pressing issues, as well as exploring why they consider these issues to be more important than other similarly pressing issues. The work I did with the two groups, in the without-prejudice period, constituted that work for this inquiry, but it was by happenstance, not intention. In future applications, I will give more attention to working with that component of the design.

Another improvement will relate to whether my learning from this experience will allow me to recognise, and can help practitioners recognise their current preferred form of reflective sharing in a group, and to work with such reflective material openly, to see if there is more learning available, at the time of its sharing.

7.3.6 My learning and the literature

One of the outcomes of this inquiry, for me, is that I am now more aware that I am less certain that I know what I mean by ‘reflective’ work – what are its boundaries, as well as its forms, and how what I understand to be reflective work matches with what others understand reflection to be. Such uncertainty and fuzziness is mirrored in the literature of reflection (Fendler, 2003). While my roots and preferences show elements that can be found in the historic antecedents of Descartes (in the emphasis on self-awareness), Dewey (in the emphasis on the ‘scientific’, and the ‘practical’ or ‘pragmatic’ convergences for implications), and Schön (in the emphasis on its value for professional practice – honouring practitioners practice knowledge), I am also reaching out for some of the more holistic and non-rational elements (Fendler, 2003). I do recognise the value of what I am doing when I am doing what I call ‘reflective work’, and the
necessity, in-practice, of its selective use for intensive work. The work I have done in this inquiry also helps me recognise significant difficulties in inquiring into ‘reflective work’ in a way that represents ecological validity for the in-practice practitioner form. Consequently, in future, my experience requires, and will allow me to interrogate the literature for a greater contextual match before accepting the findings as having relevance to my practice understanding.

### 7.4 Facilitating inquiry into practice

My practice self-inquiry had another focus: the task of facilitation. The question here was: what did I learn about facilitating, and facilitating inquiry into practice? The intensive reflective work, mentioned above, delivered the kind of internal knowledge that was needed to allow for an exploration of my thinking-action, in-practice. I recognised an opportunity for more learning about the nature of facilitating a professional development activity. Having such a new learning horizon was one of the perceptions that energised my ongoing engagement in such activity. The increased awareness of the elements of context, and their subtlety of expression, and the embeddedness of my current attentional processes to deal with them, constituted a challenge to continue reflective work on my practice, in-practice, to develop more effective self-awareness and more effective intentional mindfulness in such practice.

Three aspects of my practice, which can and need to be improved, became evident by this process:

- The relationship of preparation and performance, and the value of refreshing conceptual understandings of new processes from time to time
- The further learning required to be able to effectively identify Model I responses in-practice, especially my own, and to be able to deal with them more openly
- The role of the subtle in practice improvement.

One change that developed during the activity was the awareness of being there (Heron’s indicator of whole person facilitation engagement (Heron, 1999)) and adding

---

9 I would say that my first focus in the self-study was with the question ‘Did reflective research of practice work for me?’ That focus developed into a closer look at my understanding and practice of reflection, and of facilitation. In time, I became aware that another focus was with further understanding of the nature of inquiry.
that to my focused reflective categories. To ‘be there’ I needed to disengage from my previous practice of in situ, in vivo, notetaking. My experience of operating as a participant-observer in the action design included the training and testing of my memory and recording capabilities. I reached the point where I recognised that my increased capabilities, together with being there, were sufficient to capture the material that is significant for ongoing practice issues, providing that the necessary records are made as soon as possible after. I could ‘give myself’ to being there, attending with all my being to the moment and the interactions, and very little would be lost in the later recording. Indeed, when my attention was distracted from being there, I often did not retain a good recollection of the distraction, let alone the other interactions operating at the same time.

A further improvement of my practice may come from my recognition of the need to move the intensive reflective work into the open form, and to share it with the participants at the time. That would mean that my reflective capabilities would be at their disposal, closer to the event, when they can more effectively confirm or disconfirm inferences, and consider the use of the evaluative outcomes if they are soundly based. Such a change was the experience of the ABE participant who had a regular practice of written reflective work, and the development was prompted by both the engagement with the professional development activity and a change of organisational culture.

Summary

The experience of enacting the design highlighted the roles of context, and time, and the preparation and capacities of the facilitator, as factors impacting on the effectiveness of the design. The particular context enacted, of an organisationally supported, external contributor directed, professional development activity, was found to be valuable but limiting. The time that appears to be required for any ongoing systematic effort at practice improvement, and for sufficient work on the thinking-action complex to make the change required, was a significant commitment, and difficult to negotiate in ongoing practice conditions, and particularly for arranging sufficient continuity for group interactions where building focused learning from such interactions was a goal.
As facilitator I found that the experience of focusing reflective work on practice, and the practice of reflective work for practice improvement, was instructive. Perceptions about undertaking reflective work, developed from my reading of the literature, were challenged. Specific aspects of the design enactment, where more learning will be needed to allow me to operate appropriately and effectively, were highlighted, and it was the process of reflective work on my practice that delivered such learning. Intensive reflective work, based on significant levels of description, has allowed me to recognise the role of contextual cues to inform effective action decisions. Intensive reflective work has also allowed me to identify subtle aspects of facilitation, including those aspects of my practice which have been embedded until the intensive reflective work allowed them to be unearthed and I was then able to begin to work on understanding what is happening at that level.
8 IN-ACTION TESTING: EMERGING OUTCOMES

Overview

Up until now the focus of my analysis of the in-action testing has been with (1) the participants’ objectives in professional development; (2) the relationship between the specified design goals and the experience of the participants; and (3) on the interactive aspects of the enactment of the design with the operating context, given the facilitator’s capacities. Another focus looks at the effectiveness of the professional development activity, apart from the participants’ immediate practice-focused objectives or the design objectives, and here the question in mind is: Are there indicators of unexpected or unintentional outcomes, which are worthwhile reviewing for possible modifications (improvements) of the design as a professional development process?

8.1 Introductory remarks about emerging outcomes

Kressel points out that being able to identify something unexpected, in-practice, can sometimes be the key to developing a significant aspect of practice knowledge (Kressel, 1997, p.149). It is ‘surprise’ or ‘perplexity’ that Dewey identifies as the stimulus for reflective thinking (Dewey, 1933, p.12). Further, Kressel, p.147, points out that practice is accompanied by a lot of ‘noise’ – activity that complicates inquiry – and that selecting material that might be more promising than other material, as a focus of inquiry, is a significant aspect of effective inquiry, in-practice. How does an inquirer identify a significant surprise from a host of incidental results? Are there outcomes, or incidents in the process, that are beyond the intentions of the participants or the design, and that throw light on the nature of practice for these professionals?

The professional development activity was designed to be supportive of the development of professionals. Professionals need to be able to work independently, and autonomously, in significant areas of their practice. Professionals also need to be
able to collaborate with other professionals, clients and support staff and systems. These two capabilities can be considered to be at odds, intrapersonally, in that the first requires effective self-reliance and the second effective interdependence. Balancing these aspects of personal responsiveness, in context, is both complex and dynamic. Do the outcomes throw light on that intrapersonal balancing act?

A modified action research method, or reflective practice as Schön calls it, (Schön, 1983, p.68), permits a responsiveness to complexity and dynamism which is not necessarily available in other inquiry approaches. This inquiry, which can be considered to be based within the action research arena, includes process that allows for, and responds to, developments arising in the course of the action of the intervention, or shifting elements within the professional context, either at a personal, group, or organisational level. Were there any shifts of focus of inquiry attention that indicate the development of that sense of responsiveness to an important emergent theme for the participants?

The intent of the design is to obtain the broad objective of improved practice. The hypothesis is that certain particular experiences will generate activity that results in improved practice. The more general question, of how to use the learning available from experience more effectively, is also operating. Two values can be discerned to be operating within the design: the move towards more tightly overdetermining – what might be called the ‘controlled experiment’ construct; and the move towards increasing responsiveness. Reaching the objective of improved practice may prove to be more likely to occur in one of these competing models rather than the other. Finding out which of these two competing models is more effective in assisting professionals improve their practice will be important for the professional development practitioner. Are there any indications that overdetermining was more or less effective? Are there any indications that responsiveness was more or less effective?

One of the signs of effective work with detail, and creative thinking about detail, comes from our capacities for making patterns. It is part of the development of coherence. Another way of describing this is model-making. In developing coherence, or an overarching model, one of our cognitive tools is the personal construct (Kelly, cited in Candy, 1990) and (Stevens, 2003). One of the signs of the reflective practitioner is the
capacity to reframe – to cast another frame of evaluative criteria over a problem and see if that helps the practitioner make sense of the problem (Schön, 1983, pp.85, 93). For an ill-structured question (King & Kitchener, 1994, p.10), such tentative casting of various frames may be needed a number of times before one frame appears to be more productive than others. When a more productive frame is discerned, and discerned by the way the problem appears to amenable to the evaluative criteria of that particular frame, the next step to ‘solving’ the problem is to sequentially apply the multiple criteria that need to be satisfied for the tentative solution to approximate a best fit option, (Schön, 1983, pp.79-104). What were the additional outcome details in this instance? And what do I make of them, by way of interpretive coherence?

I noticed a number of emerging outcomes in the course of the inquiry. The task of writing, or orally reporting about the inquiry and its findings, to a variety of audiences, also drew out different aspects of the inquiry. Some of these items were part of the participants’ experience and were noticed on the basis of their recurrence, or their occurrence in both groups. As noted earlier, recurrence and occurrence in both groups, and especially of material in the participants’ own terms, deserves particular attention or weighting. Some of these items constituted particular interests relating to my own experiences as a practitioner, under one or other of my various hats.

As I looked at the list of emerging outcomes, and the questions raised as I introduced this section, a couple of patterns were discernable. A number of issues related to the professional development activity design and its effectiveness, especially in regard to responsiveness. Other issues related to the nature of inquiry. Some issues related to the personal element of practice, and practitioner effectiveness. In some cases, the less-direct outcomes could be, and have been, tied back to other sections of the reporting. The significant emerging outcomes that need to be dealt with here are: stress, confidence, power, the journey metaphor, the integrative value of the inputs, the necessity of an external agent, discerning the nature and possible implications of ‘a paradox associated with meta-process’.

8.2 Stress
One of the options in design was the offer, mentioned in both without-prejudice introductory sessions, of looking at stress in terms of self-awareness and self-management, self-care and action for self, including self-assertion. Both groups took the opportunity to tap the design responsiveness and to focus on the stress management information available in the program (see details in Chapters 5.2.4 and 5.3.4). In both cases the result of such a focus led to change, for individuals and for the groups. For the ABE group the change was a perceptive shift about the nature of negotiation that led to them being more comfortable in engaging in negotiations. For the CNHS group the change involved a shift in focus of the group endeavour from organisational concerns to personal development, something which appeared needful at the time.

8.2.1 Design context

The inputs on self-awareness that Kressel postulated might relate to a capacity to undertake reflective inquiry were identified as cognitive style (a part of the MBTI analysis) and tolerance of ambiguity. These elements of self-awareness were grouped together, in Whetten and Cameron’s material on developing management skills, with the tool developing self-awareness on locus of control, as part of a suite that helped consider a practitioner’s capacity to be responsive to change.

In the CNHS introductory session, mention of stress was made in a way that included the use of a diagram – a matrix representing the interaction of ‘importance’ (a value measure) and ‘time’ (a resource measure). Here the dimensions are important/ not important interacting with urgent/ not urgent giving at least four classes: important and urgent; important and not urgent; not important and not urgent; and not important and urgent. It is usual for the urgent to crowd out the important. Working on long-term objectives, or vision, is an instance of strategic activity within the non-urgent and important category and which gives an individual, or an organisation, guidelines for determining relative importance of competing claims, and the capacity therefore to eliminate much of the stress coming from competing claims in a limited timeframe (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.117-124). Not working on enunciating long-term objectives contributes to what is called the vicious cycle of stress: the lack of a ready mechanism for settling which competing claim needs to be dealt with, means that time needs to be devoted to making such a decision, taking time away from the task of
dealing with any claim; when a claim is not dealt with, other claims arise and begin to compete for the scarcer resource of time, and stress escalates.

8.2.2 ABE Group – Stress and negotiation

The ABE group was able to compare the material on the nature and sources of stress with the individually expressed barriers experienced in negotiation which had been compiled in an earlier session (see details in Chapters 5.2.4 and 5.2.7). This comparison provided the context for an important perceptive shift. Firstly, the nature and sources of stress were all recognised as aspects of the process of negotiation and therefore it was reasonable to find negotiating stressful. Secondly, many of the individual barriers identified were able to be matched with one of the naturally stressful components of negotiating. Thirdly, the appreciation of the structure of the preparations from the Harvard negotiating tool (Fisher et al., 1991) indicated which stressful aspects could be dealt with by which aspect of the negotiation preparation. The question of what words they were using in thinking about their interactions with other parties meant that ‘negotiation’ could now be reframed as ‘discussions’, ‘exploring options’, ‘preliminary discussions of common interests’, ‘meetings’.

Further, I shared that ‘marketing’ is about ‘investment’ – investing time in establishing a relationship upon which later commercial transactions are built.

These inputs allowed the group to reframe some of their expectations of the interactions they would have with other parties. They did not need to take rejection as personal. They did not need immediate success. They could go into discussions on the basis of being there to be about starting to build a relationship. The stressors, of anticipation, encounter, time and sense of control over the situation, that arise as part of the milieu of a negotiation, were seen to be a natural, matter-of-course, aspect of negotiation, and some viable techniques for dealing with them were possible, and had some rationale. As one participant expressed it, she found it useful ‘to look at how we react to the negotiation but also to consider how the other side may react; to remember that its OK to call 'time' and take time to consider what has happened and what options are available’ (EP1).
In-session comments of 6 April 2000, when the group was engaging in some review of progress to date, noted

(EP1): know that when try not a winner first up; time to build relationship;
(EP4): the biggest thing was [becoming aware of] It's OK to have a go; to see it as talking to people, having a meeting. Now [?we are OK with that we are] OK learning other things
(EP1): recognising that people we are dealing with are sympathetic to it
(EP4): seeing them as people and working it through to find an outcome that is cooperative
(EP1): no longer confrontation; both look to stand to benefit
(EP3): ... changed a bit for me, if we don't get it we still have opened doors. They may not be interested now, but may be interested in six months time. It's part of what we are trying to do … It's not so personal now
(EP1): building on relationships
(EP3): important to know it’s not personal, only like any other situation with a project, or service. It's one of the processes to make

The material on stress also made sufficient impact for it to be one of the inputs which constituted learning which was able to be ‘transferred’. The two participants who were engaged in delivering off-site workplace training for supervisors with an external agency, shared the stress content with their participants in that workplace training.

8.2.3  **CNHS Group – Stress, the personal and the group impact**

In the case of the CNHS group, the input on stress proved to generate an instance where exchanges moved from organisation-related concerns to person-related concerns, and raised issues for the focus of the group when in-session. The session dealing with the inputs on stress was held in the fifth session on 3 August. At the next session of 10 August an interchange occurred which illustrated both the fact of stress in their midst, and how they went about dealing with it in the context of this peer support group. A number of participants in the group were feeling the ‘pinch’. The blood pressure of one of the participants was mentioned as being particularly high, and another participant admitted to ongoing high blood pressure. In the mid session break, one of the participants went and collected the blood pressure measuring gear, and different ones took one another’s readings. My post event analysis, very post-, while working on the data for the findings reporting, was to see the interchange as another example of a meta-process: a situation where they did for one another what they would do ‘automatically’, for their patients, as part of the clinical nurse role. They cared for one another with
their professional caring model. But they were not quite able to do that same caring for
themselves. Nor were they able to apply some of the other implications and
consequences of the inputs from the professional development activity to effect more
change in their own personal practice and go the next step in dealing with stress. They
‘knew’ about stress, and could advise their clients on strategies to deal with stress, but
they could not see the necessity to apply those strategies to their own need for dealing
with the stressors in their own professional life.

8.2.4 Role of descriptive contextual detail in this reflective inquiry

Reviewing the material observed over the total period of the research project
interactions with the CNHS group, especially, demonstrated that I recorded material that
contained indicators of stress for the individuals on a number of occasions over that
period. I did not consciously set out to be alert to that. From my point of view, at the
time of recording the observations, it was ‘merely’ information associated with the as-
full-as-possible record of the events of the session and the interactions involved. It was
part of what I could recall. It became part of my recorded observations of the ‘practice
instance’ for the element of the project that constituted my practice as researcher and as
group facilitator. In those terms it informed my facilitation practice when sharing
about the Catch-22 or vicious cycle aspect of stress, and then using previous reflective
work to help focus the group’s effort on issues that were of continuing concern and
which might be susceptible to change.

8.3 Confidence and power

Confidence and power or powerlessness were themes that came through from both
groups, and the way that they were related suggests a connection with the issue of
efficacy, of agency, and perhaps by way of self-awareness. There is some literature to
support the link between confidence and power and efficacy, for example (Bandura,
1997), and it needs to be noted that Argyris considers that his concept of design
causality is premised on understandings of being human in terms of efficacy (Argyris,
1993, p.267). Further exploration of efficacy, agency, power and confidence is a task
for another occasion.
I would explain this outcome as follows: The inputs were selected with a view to improving practice by considering thinking and action, alternative thinking and alternative action. The action to be taken was to be supported by understood reasons that included confirmatory support from peers’ practice experience. Focusing on thinking-action seems to have kindled a sense of confidence that replaced perceptions from previous experience that had tended to demoralise, or disempower, the participants. The development of self-awareness and honouring of potential to act, together with joint exploration of the issues associated with the action necessary to deal with the present barriers, constituted the professional development activity design. In both situations the design proved to be sufficient to encourage the participants to act. When the action led to success, their sense of confidence and agency was restored, and in some cases flowed into other areas of necessary self-assertion in the practice setting and beyond (as noted previously in Chapter 6.6).

For the ABE participants, the conditions that were operating to demoralise included the uncertainty of moving into a new field of operation, and not feeling prepared for such a move, and having not had previous, perceived success in ‘commercial’ negotiations.

For the CNHS participants, the conditions generating demoralisation and disempowering could be related to the shift in values at an organisational level, and the resultant focus on managerial activities associated with restructuring, one outcome of which was the loss of the professional focus of the CNC Forum, as described in Chapter 5.3.7.1.

In the ABE group, reference to confidence was most pronounced in relation to their lack of confidence with negotiation, about anticipating success in negotiation with external parties of contracts for service delivery – their proposed commercial activities. ‘Confidence’, as a term, appeared in their ‘What we already know about negotiation’ group brainstorm. In that same analysis the term ‘power’ appeared. Power was used to describe a source of others’ success, with some element of rejection of the legitimacy of the exercise of power, indicating a conflict of values. The anticipated conflict associated with such negotiations was part of their reluctance to become engaged in negotiations.
The development of confidence was also a measure that the ABE participants used in judging their effectiveness in their teaching or facilitating learning role. The recurrence of this term, in this usage, became evident to me as I revisited the first round of interviews.

A group session was then convened to see if we could explore confidence, its appearance, its development, what undermined it, and by tapping their professional experience. At this session EP1, talking about when she didn’t feel confident, noted ‘It's also if you perceive you’re the one in the powerless position’. Another, expressing what generated loss of confidence for her, noted

(EP3) OK when I feel not so confident I've written loss of the sense of control, but I didn't mean control as in I'm in charge. I meant like, I'm not quite sure how to explain it, um maybe I don't know where it's going or something like that, maybe that's what I meant, I didn't mean that I was in charge so much but maybe it's just that I knew where things were going. Ok if I take something personally I might get defensive which probably knocks my confidence and if there is something that goes wrong and I can't see a way to and I've got repair written in quote marks, so and that's about all I had.

(Group Session Transcript 15 August 2000)

One of the ABE participants reported finding the session which explored their understanding of confidence to be of value, since it highlighted differences in the thinking of herself and others, and gave her pause to think about her understanding of confidence again.

(EP4) and the other thing is I guess, like even I'm thinking of last time we all got together and we were doing confidence. Like talking as a group [about] what confidence was. The realising that people do see it differently … it was broadening to look at it through other people's eyes as well and to see where different people are coming from and to then assess my own meaning of it and how much importance I gave to other people for the measure of confidence and comparing that with what other people in the group did yes, so I found that very constructive and something that has since influenced me in how I look at it, yes yes. Yes that was very good doing that.

(Action Learning Interview, 13 October 2000)

In the CNHS group the issue was expressed differently, and initially as feelings of powerlessness, and as such was one of the earlier issues raised that I took to be an expression of their ‘project objectives’ – how my designed inputs might apply to their practice and its professional development. It was in the reflections in sessions in the
latter part of the project that ‘confidence’ became the term used by the participants to express the impact of the project on them. Individuals also expressed in their end of session reflections that there was a change in the ‘feeling’ of powerlessness. For different individuals this occurred at different times, and in relation to different aspects of practice events and processes under discussion. The detailed discussion of powerlessness for the CNHS participants has been dealt with in Chapter 5.3.7.3.

8.4 ‘Journey’ metaphor and integrative thinking experienced in the sessions

The ‘journey’ metaphor has a long history in our culture\(^\text{10}\). The use of metaphor is, in Mezirow’s terms, an indication of reflectiveness, and part of the process of developing the kind of reflectiveness that contributes to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, pp.219-221). Its appearance, in the context of my professional development activity, may indicate some transformative learning experience for the participants, which was otherwise not expressed in detail. Indeed, without the metaphor the experience may have remained inexpressible. Similarly, an awareness of understanding being developed, by integrating previously disparate information, may also be considered to be aspects of transformative learning. The metaphor of journey and comments indicating integration occurred for individuals in both groups, suggesting that this was an outcome of the implemented design.

The journey metaphor came to my attention when one of the participants used the same form of words to query my process, as had been used by a participant to the same process and material in what could be considered to have been an incomplete pilot study, under other auspices. The query was ‘Where are you taking us, Dianne?’ (EDOR-15/72).

The journey metaphor appeared in both groups, in personal reflections and in group interactions. Terms involved included: ‘journey’; ‘where are you taking us/ where will this go’; ‘crossroads where to now?’; ‘alternate route’; ‘on track and off the rails’. The journey metaphor:

\(^{10}\) Ulysses’ Odyssey and Abraham’s journey of faith are two examples from elements of my cultural background that spring to mind immediately.
Contributing to Learning to Change

- was used to express uncertainty, and movement into unfamiliar ground of understanding
- was used to describe an insight about a negotiation being part of a process and the development of a relationship and not a one-off engagement or encounter
- was recognised as an important aspect of student experience, and indeed sharing with the learning involved for any adults in transitional experiences

On one occasion discussion developed between two participants to explore a metaphor, and what it was conveying of similar and different experience and discernment. My records do not capture the extent of the discussion, although my recollection is that it did not develop to any greater extent than these notes indicate. Also, I was not alert enough at the time to recognise that questioning the metaphor may have yielded more information about practice knowledge or experience of change.

HDOR-13/124, 128 HP5: what this group is doing for her - giving her the wherewithal to be clear about where going, every now and then she finds herself off the rails; this group, its focus, helps her get back on the rails, helps her 'deal with' multiple pressures. … HP4: 'rails' metaphor useful; rails spread out and coming off rails; how does HP5 see herself coming off the rails? - sideways not falling between the tracks … ; HP4: when tracks spread beyond the gauge of the train can't go on

Other instances of metaphor arose, but ‘journey’ was the most common one that I was able to recognise. A more intensive textual analysis, which extends the inquiry beyond the bounds of in-practice resources, would be required to elucidate other instances. I am now more clearly aware that all language is metaphoric – the ‘map is not the territory’; just as all statements can be seen to express premises and assumptions. The language of ‘journey’ is a common way of expressing aspects of maturing, involvement in change, or in other words: learning that is taking place over time.

Indications that the content inputs or the process were playing a role in integrative work for the participants have been noted previously in Chapter 6.5.1. Examples of integrative experience during the professional development activity included:

EPR-11/68 (EP1) More importantly, it [MBTI] explained why I found many times through my working life, great frustration in other people not being able to see the consequences of the plans that were made.

EPR-15/68-69 (EP4) Presentation of info on negotiation initially was very interesting. I saw a goal of wanting that kind of grasp.
EPR-22/9 (EP5) The session has given me much greater understanding of my current situation and the influences that exist HDOR-15/218: HP5 indicated that it [the program inputs] had brought together concepts from other management training inputs and made sense of them for her - given it a coherence, given it applicability

8.5 Necessity of the external agent

Both groups recognised that my presence, as an external party, provided something important to the process. Part of the contribution of an external party was seen to be as discipline – ensuring that time was set aside for the group engagement on the practice objective (see details in Chapter 7.1.1). Part of the contribution was seen to be in the interactions: the questions asked, often as the novice to the participants’ situation and context, or the summarising made, or the implications drawn and tested as hypotheticals. The ‘third party’ /external agent/ devil’s advocate/ consultant role is an established part of some organisational practices, thereby recognising its potential efficacy (Argyris, 1970; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Lumsden, 1993). Kressel looks to the devil’s advocate role to facilitate the inquiry process in the peer support group by being able to challenge assumptions and cherished theories (Kressel, 1997, p.157). De Bono’s ‘black hat’ option seeks to mobilise a similar function in improving thinking and structuring group thinking (DeBono, 1985). In the model of therapeutic debriefing, it seems that the role of active listening is often vital (Knights, 1985).

There is, I think, another aspect of the external agent, or the third party, operating in the implementation of the design and which touches on a dilemma and paradox of improving practice. It relates to the way a third party, or ‘the other’, may be needed to help a group, or individual, with inquiry into any part of their practice that has become too tacit and embedded. It is a role that is ‘reflective’, like a mirror, but at a deeper level, so that it is reflexive – showing subjects themselves, and helping them have the distance needed to engage in effective self-assessment. In my awareness, discerning the features of this paradox involves discerning a subtle phenomenon. But once discerned the phenomenon can be seen in other instances.
8.6 An instance of my meaning making

In this section I move from talking about my practice with the participants to considering the self-study of my practice in the context of the implementation of the design with the participants. As I facilitated the implementation of the design with the participants, and observed the outcomes, I was also pondering what was working and how. What was working appeared to be subtle: the design was working, but not obviously so, and I was not getting clear and unequivocal statements from the participants about what they were responding to, or how they were understanding what was impacting on them to generate change.

8.6.1 Introduction and definition

One such development of subtle awareness that occurred for me during the in-practice experience of facilitating the professional development design was the identification of what I call ‘a paradox associated with meta-process’. It involves a reflexive aspect of professional practice and professional practice improvement by self-study, where the subject is the object and vice versa. I was able to discern, in the engagements with the participants, and in the observation of my own practice, a point where, in-practice, we lose sight of the process of that practice, and how it applies to ourselves as we endeavour to problem solve and to improve practice effectiveness. This may well be a paradox of competent practice.

I continue to struggle with the perception, its description and exactly what to call it. As I have engaged with the literature it includes some of the nuances Schön describes in his concept of the ‘Hall of Mirrors’ (Schön, 1987, pp.220, 289, 294) (Schön, 1991, pp.355-6), which Andresen picks up and uses in a slightly different, but consistent way (Andresen, 1993, pp.59-70). Whitehead uses the term ‘living contradiction’ within his conception of a ‘living educational theory’ (Whitehead, 1989). Fendler speaks of irony (Fendler, 2003). I bring together some examples of these viewpoints in Appendix 8.6.

*The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* defines ‘metaethics’ in the following way:

‘The second-order activity of investigating the concepts and methods of ethics, rather than directly engaging with practical (‘first-order’) issues of what to do and how to behave. The distinction is apt to blur, in that
different views about the structure of ethics usually have implications for first-order decision making’ (Blackburn, 1996, p.239).

Professional practice is made up of any number of processes. For the improvement of any process, an operator needs to explore the process of that process, an activity at the second-order, meta-level, or meta-process. Some practices are, by their very nature, at this second-order, meta-level, whether that is recognised or not. Such examples include teaching about teaching, managing managing. When the processes of the professional practice include interpersonal communications, then improving those processes includes engaging with the personal, the self-study, as well as communications, the interaction between persons. To go to a meta-level of one’s own activities involves the difficulties and dilemmas of reflexivity, and the risk of confusion. Human communications involve a significant amount of meta-communication, often represented by non-verbal cues. Within oral and verbal communication there is the metaphor, for which The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy has the following to say:

‘metaphor The most important figure of speech, in which one subject-matter (sometimes called the tenor) is referred to by a term or sentence (the vehicle) that does not literally describe it: the ship of state, the light of faith, etc. Philosophical problems include deciding how the border between literal and metaphorical meaning is to be drawn, understanding how we interpret metaphors with the speed and certainty which we often manage, and deciding whether metaphors can themselves be vehicles of understanding, or whether they should be regarded only as signposts to literal truths and falsities about the subject-matter’ (Blackburn, 1996, p.240).

While I am not completely happy with what happens when I consider constructing compound words with the element of ‘meta’ in them, I tend to hold onto the ‘meta’ component, following Bateson. It seems to me that what is going on in the phenomenon I have observed relates to levels of learning, and to mental processes involved in habitual ways of understanding the world – routinisation, unexamined assumptions. Further, the paradox comes from individuals not being able to operate at a certain level of perception to discern the contraries that generate the paradox and bind the actor from effective action within their own too well-known practice frame (Bateson, 1972). This understanding may offer additional points of leverage for making the breakthrough in creating the distance needed to deal with the paradox. Also, Bateson hints that the absurdities of the paradox generated by contraries in a logical level may link to humour, which suggests to me a possible contextual cue for the
discomfort of recognising incongruity. Certainly, I noticed the (discomforted?) chuckle or laugh in some interactions, in-practice, and was aware that I needed to develop a mechanism for querying such a non-verbal response, in a way that gained valid information.

8.6.2 My experience of the implementation of the design

One way of perceiving what was happening for the participants during the process of the implementation of the design was to link my design components to their ‘usual practice’ as they engaged with their clients. What they used as process to work with clients’ problems could be seen to be similar to what I was using as process to work with the issue of developing practice improvement for them when engaging in what I called reflective research of practice. When it came to engaging in practice improvement, we were unaware that the very processes we used with others were needed to achieve our own practice improvement. Furthermore, in using that practice on a daily basis with others, we were too close to the aspects of process to mobilise them in the interests of our own improvement task.

For the teacher group the processes of my professional development activity design – assessment, bringing new content inputs, applying those content inputs to the student’s current skill base, practising the new ways of dealing with the task, looking for evidence of change and improvement, giving feedback on such improvement – were very similar to their own practice of teaching adult basic education. It appeared that they were not aware of that. Further, they could not mobilise those processes easily, to engage in the improvement of their own practices, systematically, and intentionally. The doing of the practice with others was given first, second and more priority. The improvement of their own practice, by devoting time to that end and using the same techniques, was not considered as important.

Similarly, for the participants in the nursing group, my designed professional development activity, as it expressed itself amongst them, and responsively to their interests and concerns, was similar to their own practice of assessment and mobilisation of resources to address clients’ problem conditions. The self-care implicit in the work needed to undertake improvement of practice, and personal efficacy in-practice,
including the individual’s management of stress, again had second, third, or lesser priority to that of responding to client or organisational demands. They were not aware that they had the means of improving their own practice in the tools they used when helping others.

For myself, it was a matter of not being able, as a first resort, to mobilise reflective work to engage with the improvement of my writing, one of the key elements of the practice of a communicator. I was caught out in an expressed denial of the efficacy of my espoused process for my own practice.

8.6.3 The process of discerning this insight for me

Data gathered during the experience of the inquiry sourced my meaning making. I considered the emergence of this insight to be significant. The significance lay in its difference to the framing of effectiveness that I was exploring in the more straightforward evaluation of the design. It did not correspond to the categories of the participants’ objectives (Chapter 5), or the design outcomes identified in the preparations to evaluate the design (Chapter 6), or the matching of intention and action for the effectiveness of facilitating the design (Chapter 7). It represented a development in my focal attention in an unexpected way. Its recognition was something quite subtle, and very difficult to make a one-to-one correspondence between the data and the conclusion. It was a matter of building a picture of the whole, and in terms which meant that I could discern more than one instance, and with sufficient similarity between the whole pictures for the synthesis to be describing a phenomenon outside of my design expectations. I was inclined to weight this finding as more valuable than my other findings. In making that judgement I was privileging both the ‘novelty’ of the perception for me, and the fact that it happened in the course of ‘usual practice’, rather than in the course of the kind of intensive data processing that happens after the event in the course of writing up, and which is, by comparison, relatively ‘impractical’.

11 Here is what were my evaluative criteria in giving it more attention than some of the other findings – note the other findings had to be there to satisfy me that the design was effective – they were a bit like minimal conditions; here was ‘icing on the cake’, as it were.
The insight constituted an ‘inventive’ finding. It was my invention. It involved more of the abductive process – comparing instances of experience – than inductive or deductive processes that another might follow, easily. When shared it may be relatable. But to be inventive it was an outcome of what had been going on in my particular ‘black box’. It represented what I was attending to, and how I was attending to it. Another, living in and through the same situation, may well have a different perspective, or perceptive view. They may well focus on different data, and process the experience into a whole of a different kind – what makes sense to them.

Having become aware of this dilemma of practice, where the person is the instrument of practice, I have been able to discern further instances of the phenomenon in comments made by participants about practice concerns arising during the inquiry. As Dewey says, meaning informs our observatory capacities, (Dewey, 1933, pp.165-168). In further practice development I expect to be able to enunciate the dilemma, and check it more contemporaneously with the participants, and explore in what way such an awareness, if confirmed, might allow us to make a breakthrough on our practice effectiveness.

8.6.4 Preparation for capacity to discern this phenomenon

My alertness to a ‘meta’ factor goes back to my engagement with masters level studies commencing in 1996. When I engaged in post-graduate studies in dispute resolution, it was with a view to improving my practice, dealing with a discerned gap. Within that focus, I narrowed my attention further, to that of teaching, or facilitating learning about dispute resolution, and for application back in the workplace. That led to considering how I was learning what I was learning and how that might be applied – that is to say I was giving some of my focal attention to the process of ‘teaching’ mediation skills. The journal articles that caught my attention were those that discussed training and education of mediators. One such was Mary Power’s *Educating Mediators Metacognitively* (Power, 1992). Power was making the point that mediators, and prospective mediators, need to be self-conscious about their learning needs, and how to have those needs met. Part of her argument included the call to become ‘reflective problems solvers’ (p.214).
'Metacognitive’ was a new term for me. I eventually worked out that it meant ‘thinking about thinking’. It represents operating at what Bateson calls another logical level (Bateson, 1972, pp.279-308). Other meta-process statements include: learning to learn; reading about reading; writing about writing; researching research; watching watchers; practitioners practising (in either and both senses of the term ‘practice’). But I was also unsure of how metacognition operated in practice.

When I experienced the conundrum of being unable to effectively evaluate an aspect of my practice by using the reflective inquiry technique to make the changes that were necessary to improve practice, and to see that the participants in my inquiry were also failing to discern how their practice techniques could be used to investigate and improve their practice, I was quite captivated by this old idea in new clothes. I made associations with the old idea encapsulated in the saying ‘Physician, heal thyself’\(^\text{12}\). It represents a dilemma of efficacy: that as practitioners we may be so involved in doing something that we lose sight of its process, especially for its application to ourselves. When we do so, we run the risk of incongruence: not practising what we preach. Incongruence in practice is one of the underlying concerns of those currently engaging in the field of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices (Loughran, 2004b) and arises in part because modelling is considered a significant aspect of the person-in-practice, a practitioner’s presentational knowledge (Heron, 1999; Whitehead, 2003).

### 8.6.5 Sequence of events leading up to and surrounding my recognition of the phenomenon

Possible factors operating in the lead up to my discerning synthesis included:

- I had experienced a significant level of frustration with my writing in June 2000, and when challenged about being reflective about it, blurted that ‘I had tried that and it didn’t work’.
- I was reading Bateson’s *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* at the end of June and into the middle of July 2000.

\(^{12}\) This saying was used by Jesus to talk about his miracle making elsewhere (Capernaum) but which was absent in Nazareth - Luke 4:23. A second challenge came in the ‘save yourself’ taunt when he was on the cross - Matthew 27:39-43. This time the challengers claimed that if he could save himself that would secure their belief, and the taunt was that he had saved others.
• I had revisited the audio records of the ABE Round 1 interviews from April to prepare for a group session on 15 June 2000, thus refreshing my awareness of the activity with that group, and what they were saying was happening for them, and where EP1 had acknowledged that the design was producing the change hoped for but could not express how it was working.

• The CNHS group had worked with issues related to assessment at its 6 July 2000 meeting in the context of undertaking the TOA self-assessment tool. In my reflections of that session I had explicitly recognised that I was discerning a ‘meta’ aspect in the interchange about assessment: I related the comments made by the participants back to the work that I had done with them to date; and I hypothesised that it might be a possible explanation of why the professional development activity design had been so productive, even at that early stage.

• At the 20 July CNHS meeting, HP4 made a comment to the effect that ‘what was going on in the relationship building with clients through the assessment process was what was going on in this group’. The comment was made in the context of undertaking the LOC self-assessment tool and revisiting the group reflections on assessment from the previous meeting. It was also made in a context that did not include any prompting from me. Consequently the allusion, read as I read it, had more weight for me. I did not confirm the allusion at the time, in part because it was still only a rather tenuous and subtle idea for me, and also because I did not want to interrupt the thinking of others that was going on at the time, and I did not want to ‘prejudice’ the ‘emergence’ of such a concept, if it was significant – another instance of how my resilient inquiry frame limited effective inquiry in this instance (Argyris, 1993)

• On 26 July 2000, I was talking with EP1 in the context of the second round of interviews when I was asking the ABE participants how their action learning projects were going, and EP1 reciprocated by asking me how my project was going. It was while articulating how the project was going for me, to respond, that the ‘meta’ aspect of these three separate instances became much clearer to me.
At the time of my awareness of the insight (26-27 July 2000) I drafted the stories of the project experiences for the participants as I saw it, as one way of capturing what it was that I had become aware of, and also checking the accuracy of what experiential data I was synthesising into such a story. I also gathered other allusions that came to mind, and prepared a description of what I thought I was perceiving, to share with and test amongst the ARLIST participants. Although there was no response from ARLIST, either taking up the idea and responding with confirmation from a similar perception, or challenging, the process of preparing to engage with peers was an important stage in clarifying what was a rather subtle and elusive idea.

I was able to share the constructed story with the ABE group (see details in Chapter 7.1.5). While no participant recorded any ‘aha’, the group did appreciate my description of their activities in these terms. Also, later in the session, one of the participants described the issues associated with engaging in any professional development activity in terms similar to the expectations the teachers had of their ABE students as far as commitment to learning was concerned.

8.6.6 Further experiential work, by self-study, with the phenomenon

If a meta-process involves the capacity to evaluate effectively an aspect of self, and to take effective corrective steps, and if the essence of reflective work is evaluation, then gradually, over the past three years, as I have engaged with the present task, I have built a number of tools that help me establish the kind of distance that allows me (a subject) to evaluate my own practice (an object, but with a reflexive relationship to a subject) more effectively. From that experience, and my awareness of my internalities, I acknowledge that the process is slow, and has required: (1) a variety of different kinds of inputs from external parties, sometimes focusing on the big picture and other times focusing on detail, or micro-processes; (2) ongoing attentiveness, by me, to the contemporaneous description of what I am doing, together with how I am thinking about what I am doing; (3) trialling others’ suggestions of how to go about the task; (4) having some mechanism of evaluating performance and discerning change – either some external input or some documentation of before and after.
8.6.7  Implications of concept for practice and practice improvement

As I consider the issue, the paradox and dilemma of the meta-process operating in working with the improvement of professional practice appears to arise on the cusp of competence and expertise. It occurs when we know what we are doing and are comfortable with its basic efficacy, and the ways of doing most aspects of the practice have become routinised, a patterned approach. At that point it is harder to recognise and admit incapacity, inability, or incompetence because of two factors: the embeddedness of the practice, and our self-identity/ self-esteem/ face gathered up into our sense of competence in our profession. Whether the practitioner stays on that cusp and eventually falls back into competence, or moves on to greater expertise, depends on whether they are able to mobilise the usefulness of reflexivity in reflective practice, or have the assistance of some external agent to assist them move beyond that point. Such an external agent is sometimes absolutely necessary: the surgeon cannot physically operate on his own back, if that is what is needed to restore health. It is at the point where the reflexivity of reflective practice breaks down for the individual that the role of the external agent becomes highly significant. A peer support group, enabled to engage in critically examining their current practices, in a valid inquiry process, can then become the route for further individual improvement in-practice, by fulfilling the role of an accessible external agent. This exploratory inquiry is one way of demonstrating the extent to which such a view represents my current theory-in-use.

As Donald Schön describes it (Schön, 1987, p.294)

Our Version of the Hall of Mirrors … we [coaches] became aware of our own predicament as a version of theirs [students] .. we tried to involve [the students] with us in joint reflection on the learning/coaching enterprise. We knew that in certain crucial aspects we knew more than they; but we also knew the limits of our ability to describe our practice and keenly felt our uncertainties about coaching …

… the paradox of our aspiration [of having the students as co-researchers] was that it depended on meanings and skills the students had not yet acquired. Nevertheless, we noticed that some of our students were manifestly more successful than others in joining our reflective experimentation. .. [the successful] students seemed to be distinguished by three qualities .. [1] highly rational .. [1.1] in their ability to recognize logical inconsistencies when these were pointed out .. [1.2] their abhorrence of inconsistency and incongruity .. [1.3] their readiness to test their assumptions by appeal to directly observable data. .. [2] highly reflective [2.1] evidenced by their readiness to analyze
their errors .. [2.2] try out thought experiments .. [2.3] and critically examine their own reasoning .. [3] they were inclined toward cognitive risktaking: more challenged than dismayed by the prospect of learning something radically new, more ready to see their errors as puzzles to be solved than as sources of discouragement

Summary – Questions framing the review of emerging outcomes

As can be seen from this chapter and Chapter 6, there is an embarrassment of riches of points of interest about practice and what might be required to assist a practitioner engage in improving practice. The framing question for this chapter asked: Are there indicators of unexpected or unintentional outcomes, which are worthwhile reviewing for possible modifications (improvements) of the design as a professional development process? There are other outcomes worthwhile reviewing for what they indicate about the nature and improvement of practice, but the question of what might be ‘indicators’ of significance to use as a selecting screen for attending to the data has turned out to be still too big a question for me. It is a question for another day, for additional experience.

The question of competing values in the design: of moving toward more overdetermining, or staying with responsiveness, it seems to me, is for participants to decide, in their context and for their objectives. When a participant gives an answer to a question about slowness in response of ‘we're not used to making a decision for ourselves’ (HP4, HDOR-04/121), and in the context of expressed feelings of powerlessness, then to the extent that confidence, power and efficacy of agency is significant in learning by experience, learning to act, intentionally, and take account of responses, then it seems to me that the overdetermining route is that of the high internal locus of control, the management by control of bureaucracy, and that, as expressed in current organisational operations, risks seriously undermining professional efficacy.

If there is an overarching learning about the professional development activity design from the emerging outcomes noted here – stress, confidence and power, journey and integration, external agent, and the paradox associated with meta-processes – it relates to the issue of ownership of the process, and how that needs to be transferred from the current design, where it tends to reside with the facilitator, to another model where it
can more consciously reside with the practitioners. In making that move, however, a paradoxical aspect of self-study needs to be recognised.

Ultimately, the responsibility for establishing the context for effective inquiry into practice, by professionals, for their own professional practice, resides with the professionals themselves. Acting on that will be evidence of their efficacy in agency, and as independent, operationally professional practitioners, establishing their own internal standards of practice. Sustaining a priority in valuing work on improving practice in the midst of practice, and other organisational constraints, appears to be something that all professions can learn from the practice of some professions (notably psychotherapy and social work). However, unless more individuals experience its value, and insist on valuing it for themselves and their peers, the pressure from current broader dominant value structures will continue to limit improvement of practice.

But it should be noted that doing self-study on practice, and using reflective processes to do so, whether in a peer support group or not, runs the risk of being caught in the bind of a paradox associated with meta-process. Being alert to that risk, and having mechanisms to obviate that risk – an external agent, or the structural role of devil’s advocate, for instance by the formal use of the ‘black hat’ amongst the other thinking hats – will be something each practitioner or each peer support group may need to be able to address. Being aware of what will be required – in the way of time, and of intensive descriptive work on the embedded processes, and with inputs from others about macro- and micro- aspects of the embedded skill, and the role of documenting for feedback about progress – to deal with the meta-process bind, may help practitioners be more realistic about expectations for change and improvement when such an aspect of their practice is reached in the self-study route.
9 DRAWING A TENTATIVE CONCLUSION

Overview

I have shared how, in a long career of professional practice, the question “How do I improve my practice?” has operated, informally, to develop my practice as I have filled a number of different roles. I have also shared how I was motivated to develop an action design for a professional development activity, which I could then evaluate by both comparing the design with the experience of other practitioners as reported in the literature, and by evaluating the design in-action. The in-action testing, as an exploratory undertaking, involved two illustrative case studies of groups of professionals and a self-study.

In this thesis I have discussed how my findings indicate that the professional development activity design had merit – it allowed practitioners to improve their practice, and it contributed to the improvement of my practice. In addition, I became aware that as the facilitator, my expectations that the design would facilitate a process of learning to change were higher than the outcomes achieved. I was satisfied, as a designer, looking for professional effectiveness, that the design achieved change for the participants that met their current and immediate needs for such change. I was satisfied, as a learner, looking for increased understanding of my practice and its milieu, that in working with the design, the design components had also worked on me, and had produced changes that I recognised as learning, and included learning about previously inaccessible or unattended to aspects of my practice. However, targets that I had set – of having, or developing, a peer group which was learning enough about practice to want to continue with the approach to improving practice that was contained in the principles of the design, and which was learning about practice by engaging in mutual and robust critique of thinking and the thinking-action complex – were not reached. These targets were informed by my reading of claims in the literature, and by my sensing of gaps in my own practice experience, and my awareness of limitations in my
practice effectiveness as a result of the absence of respectful and constructive criticism. Furthermore, I became aware that the outcomes from the implementation of the design were richer than my evaluation design was geared to capture, and more subtle than I anticipated. Also, I began to appreciate, in a way not appreciated before, the nature of contextual cues that informed practice decisions and how being more aware of these contextual cues might give my leverage to improve my practice.

In this chapter, I draw the findings of the exploration together. I summarise the outcomes of the design testing and indicate how my engagement with the literature assisted me to develop a more nuanced conceptual framework. This chapter summarises: (1) how my understanding of the nature of learning to change developed; (2) how my understanding of the nature of inquiry developed; (3) to what extent I was able to realise the embedded nature of evaluation and the values held by the practitioner and how they operated in learning to change and in conducting any inquiry; (4) how my revised understanding of the nature of inquiry required me to reconsider my concept of reflective research of practice, and to recognise some of its inherent limitations as well as its strengths. Such a journey reminds me, that as a reflective practitioner, conclusions remain tentative (King & Kitchener, 1994), and that more experience with the design will yield more understanding of what is involved in learning to change. Each time I take my design, and my understanding of how it operates, to other situations, I expect to refine my present understanding, operating with what some call a practitioner’s hermeneutic spiral (Gummesson, 1991, p.62). When incremental adjustment of the concept fails to sufficiently explain all the observed responses, another way of conceiving the phenomena under consideration will be required – either by reframing (Schön, 1983) or by exercising discontinuous creativity, drawing on abductive reasoning from other, apparently unrelated experience (Bateson, 1972; Mezirow, 1991). The process is but a stage in lifelong learning.
9.1 Does the professional development activity work?

In broad terms, testing the enunciated design, via the literature, and in-action, indicated that the professional development activity did have merit, and the extent of its ‘working’ is conveyed in the following summary:

1. Whilst my professional development activity design is innovative in its specifics and structure, elements of the design and the rationale for the design are substantially supported by the documented experience of other practitioners in the field. (Chapter 3)

2. The professional development activity design provides a vehicle for professionals to deal with current relevant professional issues by making changes in their thinking-action complex – it is open, flexible and responsive. (Chapter 5, Chapter 7.2, Chapter 8.2 and 8.7)

3. The work with self-awareness in the group builds more trust and openness for the group, and combined with the focus on relevant issues of their choice, allows for the mutual rebuilding of confidence in self-efficacy which encourages action by building small changes in attitude (including confidence), in option generation, in sense of design and intentionality in actions. (Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 8.3)

4. Implementing the designed inputs to the level accomplishable within the context established, the time available, and the facilitation capacities that I brought to the process (Chapter 7), yielded evidence of change for the participants, and for myself, on the dimensions that the design intended to address. The change was both richer than my evaluation design was geared to capture, and more subtle than anticipated. (Chapter 6)

5. The designed, trifold focus – on self-awareness (Chapter 6.1); structured reflective work (Chapter 7.3); and while operating in a group context, using those elements as preparatory components for
professional development activity focusing on an action-learning-based-inquiry of current practice concerns (Chapter 5, Chapter 6.3, Chapter 6.6) – was seen to be interactive (Chapter 6.6.4), and appeared to contribute to the re-affirmation of the person and personal agency (Chapter 5, Chapter 6.1-6.6, Chapter 8.3, 8.7).

6. The most significant changes for myself came from (1) the challenges the detailed findings presented in regard to my perception of the nature, and form of reflective work that I brought into the inquiry, developed in the most part from my reading of the literature of the field of reflective practice (Chapter 7.3), and (2) the awareness, built by the reflective work on my practice, of my capacity to facilitate learning via this design, including the beginnings of greater awareness of embedded elements of my practice of facilitation (Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.4). In both these areas, and in the area of my practice as an inquirer, I was able to discern clear indications of ways of improving my current practice within this design, including improving aspects of the design (Chapter 4.6, Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.3, Chapter 7.4).

7. Emerging outcomes from my interpretation of patterns of responses developed in and with the participants, in the course of learning by and from the experience of the design, provided more understanding of the role of responsiveness in the design, the nature of inquiry, and the personal element of practitioner effectiveness (Chapter 8). One such pattern, which I call ‘a paradox associated with meta-process’, is where practitioners lose sight of the elements of their own specific practice, and are unable to use those elements on their own practice to improve it. The process seems to threaten the capacity of self-study by reflective inquiry to produce practice improvement and to hint at some of the unintentional contradictions that arise for practitioners as competence builds (Chapter 8.6).

8. In the 40 hours of my facilitating engagement with the participants, neither groups reached the point where they engaged in any critical
review of an explanatory theory-in-use associated with an action and the success or failure of the action. The literature indicates such a change is a longer, harder process (Chapters 5-8).

9. The participants’ experience of the professional development activity did not appear to generate sufficient motivation for them either to continue to develop reflective research of practice as a route of practice improvement, or to continue to convene as a group for peer support in an action learning environment (Chapter 6 summary, Chapters 5-8).

10. My experience of the professional development activity confirmed that reflective research of practice was my natural form of practice improvement, and concentrating my intentional reflective work on developing self-awareness contributed significant learning (Chapter 4.7, Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.3-7.4, Chapter 8.6).

11. As I evaluated the findings I became aware of possible improvements to the design which lay within the current design principles, and the most significant change needed is a change that moves the activity as close as possible to self-authorised cooperative inquiry (Chapter 4.1, Chapter 4.6, Chapter 7.1, Chapter 8.5, Chapter 8 summary).

12. Whereas at the beginning my perception was that a design stood on its own, I now realise that any design is an expression of its designer’s values, and the impact a design has on participants is dependent as much on the participants’ perceptions of its value to them as it might be on any of the implementing capabilities of its designer. To the extent that a design definitely does not stand on its own, and my design is an expression of my values, of my decision making in choosing between one value and another when selecting between options during the designing process, then critiquing my design comes down to critiquing my practice, and for me to be able to do that requires me to develop my self-study capabilities (Chapters 1-8) ‘Reflective research of practice’ might be better designated as ‘practitioner self-study’ (Chapter 9.5-9.6)
The findings, with their richness, subtlety, and relative ambiguity, some of which may be lost in the summarising imposed in reporting these outcomes, together with the operation of my personal practice-based evaluative criteria, left me dissatisfied and unsettled. I returned to the literature to clarify my understanding of the nature of learning to change. With inputs from the documented experiences and conceptualising of experienced scholar-practitioners, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of the nature of the learning that I was exploring during this inquiry, and how such learning would present in change, and how I could recognise it and evaluate it appropriately.

9.2 Developing my conceptual framework

The experience of the implementation of the design, together with prior practice experiences that stimulated this inquiry, and recollections of other experiences of practice that were revitalised by the abductive work involved in my meaning-making as I responded, in-practice, to the demands of facilitating this design, raised issues for me about how I was understanding learning, and change, and what were my implicit expectations of this design. In response, I reconsidered the thinking that was informing my actions and implicit expectations, in-practice.

I understand intentional action to be an action where one knows (has learned) what to do, and how to do it, and has some if-then causal explanation for the expected outcome of such an action (a why-and-in-what-contextual-circumstances-understanding that such an action is likely to be successful). As I look back on how this investigation developed, I recognise that I have been grappling with ‘learning’, and ‘inquiry’, and ‘evaluation’, and the interactive complex between these three concepts that is involved in preparing for thoughtful action to bring intentional change to people as individuals and in interaction with others. My explanatory argument began to develop as follows (December 2001 – April 2002 summary expression):

**Learning:** To make a change in practice, to improve practice, there needs to be learning about practice, in particular an increased awareness about the nature of one’s own practice. What is the nature of the learning required to improve one’s own practice? Part of the answer is: it needs to be ‘actionable knowledge’ in Argyris’ terms,
and ‘learned’ in Argyris’ terms – where the actor is able to detect and correct the error (Argyris, 1993, p.3). To correct error involves being able to take a different action, or to change the thinking related to the action, or sometimes to change both: the thinking and the action.

**Inquiry:** To learn about practice, inquiry about practice has to be conducted. For the individual’s practice, it is inquiry about the specific individual’s actual practice. The individual’s practice has some elements in common with all other practices, but some elements are idiosyncratic to the individual. To improve this practice it is up to the individuals to identify their own learning needs. I argue that this involves self-inquiry. An aspect of self-inquiry involves self-awareness. What is the nature of the self-inquiry needed to improve practice? I argue that part of the answer is: it needs firstly to be appropriate to inquiry into practice. Further, being able to conduct that inquiry in a collaborative or cooperative context is needed to help manage both the complexity inherent in the practice context and the potential for bias that is considered to arise in self-inquiry (Kressel, 1997, p.146-7).

**Evaluation:** To make any change involves:

- investigation to suggest what needs to be changed, and
- investigation to suggest how to change what needs to be changed;
- then a decision to act, where the action to be taken is informed by the investigation;
- then reviewing the learning from the results of the investigation, the acting, and ongoing investigation of the results of the action, to know that change in all its fullness. (Argyris, 1970, 1993; Whetten & Cameron, 1995)

The basis of that decision to act needs to be as sound as possible. How we evaluate soundness to inform such a decision is then part of the process. What form does this evaluation take? Is that evaluation itself soundly based? A first step in identifying the form of the evaluation, to be able to check on how soundly based it is, involves becoming self-aware about one’s active values – the values one acts upon.

The activities involved are operating at a second-order, meta-level, where the whole process may be considered to be learning about learning, inquiring into inquiry in order
Contributing to Learning to Change

to learn, evaluating an evaluative practice of inquiry for learning to act. In that understanding, actors are evaluators who are reflecting on their mode of inquiry. Actors are directly involved and therefore controlling the inquiry and are committed to achieving an improvement in their practice. The change, of action, or of thinking, or of the thinking-action complex, will be a result of applying the actionable knowledge derived from the evaluative review of experience. For thoughtful action to bring intentional change learning, inquiry and evaluation are seen to be inextricably interrelated.

My beginning understanding – of learning to change, and the interaction of learning, inquiry and evaluation in any such process – has been developed by further attention to the findings and theorising of other scholar-practitioners working in the same field, in the light of my experience from implementing my design, and in the following ways.

9.3 Learning to change

Drawing on the work of Argyris, Mezirow, Bateson, Schön and Heron, all experienced scholar-practitioners and within the field of my interests, for understanding what is going on in learning to change, for professional practitioners looking to improve their practice, allowed me to synthesise the following converged understanding, which illuminated my findings, and explained why my expectations for the professional development activity design were overambitious.

- Learning to change requires a learning that involves inquiry, and the kind of inquiry that needs to reach down to the level of assumptions and values of the inquirer (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Bateson, 1972), the level that Mezirow calls transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991).

- The kind of inquiry that reaches down into the assumptions and values of the professional practitioner includes reflection-on-action which (1) asks questions of a practitioner about what they are doing and how they are thinking about what they are doing and (2) may indicate a requirement for new thinking, new ways
of framing what they were understanding the problem to be (Schön, 1983, 1995).

- In addition, changing assumptions and values, in the first instance, will need to be discontinuous or creative. Further, discontinuity is essentially risky, running against all the other indicators of the conservative: culture, and prior experience informed by the simpler arguments of instrumental learning and reasoning (Bateson, 1972). That being the case, it stands to reason that a great deal of energy would be required to overcome the emotional barriers involved in making the change necessary to demonstrate the effectiveness of such learning.

- Energy, for the implications of making a change in a thinking-action complex, can come from the experience of the comfortableness of the understanding that develops in the solution itself – the satisfying feeling coming from new meaning (Koestler, 1966). That is to say it becomes ‘grounded’ in feeling. While grounding in feeling comes after the insight, it is the insight, and the satisfaction with the understanding arising, that provide the motivating energy to take the next steps to make a change that represents a stabilised new view of the world, demonstrable in congruent practical action that is different from the previously ineffective action. Heron’s model of experiential learning has suggestions of how such an understanding might be mobilised in facilitating learning (Heron, 1999).

I needed this more nuanced understanding to explain what I was not finding as I conducted the implementation of the design.

Learning to change, when it involves some engagement with one’s values, and when it requires dealing with a routine or a patterned response which has proven to be inadequate in some instance, is difficult, complex, and takes time, and significant levels of effort and support are required to accomplish such learning. My experience, including the findings of this inquiry, and the literature, seem to be in accord at this point. Since change is a part of any learning, learning to change is, by definition, learning to learn, a second-order process (Bateson, 1972). A facilitator working in this
area, with adults, needs therefore to appreciate the difficulty, attend to the complexity, and provide the validation that time is required.

The explanatory conceptual understanding supporting these descriptors is as follows:

- Learning to change is difficult because it involves learning that a certain level of inquiry, the instrumental level, is not good enough for certain areas of activity, especially human and social interactivity. The learning required is at a level where instrumental techniques are no longer effective, and new, more appropriate techniques need to be learned
  
  (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Bateson, 1972, 1979)
  
  (My whole and integrated experience – Chapter 1-8; Chapter 3.2.7, Chapter 4.1.1 especially).

- Learning to change is complex because it involves multiple factors operating at a personal level: affect, presentation, proposition and practical (Heron, 1999); emotional, behavioural, cognitive (Boud et al., 1985); and learning to change needs to have all of those factors in place in a holistic and congruent way, and may involve change and interactive change in all of those factors
  
  (Boud et al., 1993; Boud et al., 1985; Heron, 1999; Mezirow, 1991; Schön, 1987)
  
  (My experience of working with the literature to understand more of why this learning to change is difficult – Chapter 3, Chapters 4-8 implications, Chapter 4.1 for learning about evaluation and inquiry processes, Chapter 7.3.4 for my experience with learning to facilitate the design and helping others’ inquiry to improve practice).

- Learning to change takes time since the learning that a certain level of inquiry, the instrumental level, is not good enough, involves multiple experiences over time, as well as the awareness that interactions in the human and social realm are not simply determined or determinable
  
  (Argyris, 1993; Bateson, 1972, 1979)
  
  (My experience of working with the literature in response to practice-informed concerns – Chapter 2, Chapter 3-8, Chapter 3.2.7 for the action learning/research modes).

- It takes time to set in place each of the change elements of the complexity and to develop them as a whole and actionable when the context is appropriate
  
It takes time to learn a new and more appropriate form of inquiry to bring the necessary changes to the practitioner’s thinking-action complex so that the practitioner is able to investigate a presenting problem from the new conceptual frame and to design another action if the cues from the context suggest that previous actions are not appropriate.

(Argyris, 1993; Bateson, 1972, 1979; Schön, 1987)
(My experience Chapters 1-8, especially Chapter 4.1, Chapter 4.7, Chapter 7.3-7.4, Chapter 8.6; awareness of the role of context in determining appropriate responses: partly recognised in design Chapter 3.2.5; recognised in practice Chapter 5.2, 5.3, and Chapter 7.4, Chapter 8.2.4, Chapter 8.6).

The significant levels of effort required include:

- the cognitive work required for this level of learning
  (Argyris, 1993; Bateson, 1972, 1979)
  (My experience, especially Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.3-7.4, Chapter 8.6)

- work on all dimensions for whole person learning
  (Heron, 1999)
  (My experience, especially Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.4, Chapter 8.6, and including affect as a structured reflective heading Chapter 7.3)

- work on making conscious those elements of a practice that have become embedded or routinised and which need to be accessed to be reviewed, with a view to considering change, for example assumptions and sets of interactive sets of assumptions that may be part of a world view
  (Boud et al., 1993; Boud et al., 1985; Mezirow, 1991)
  (My experience, especially Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.4, Chapter 8.6; and part of what I have not been able to do in working with my understanding of evaluation – Chapter 4.7.9)
The support required to engage in this kind of learning includes:

- the support of peer learners – where participants can pool valid information from experience in the same practice, and engage in shared challenging of explanatory models for the thinking-action complex
  
  (Argyris, 1993; Kressel, 1997; Schön, 1991)  
  (My experience of the role that the literature has played in this inquiry, in the absence, at times, of relevant, live, peer interactions – Chapter 3.1-3.3, Chapter 4.1.4, Chapter 4.6-4.7, Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.3-7.4, Chapter 8.6)

- the support of resources, especially the time required, for undertaking this learning while in the context of the practice, focused on taking action, and on making changes in actions in the specific live practice context
  
  (Argyris, 1993; Kressel, 1997; Schön, 1987)  
  (Recognised partly in the design Chapter 3.2.4; my experience Chapter 7.1.3, Chapter 7.3.4, Chapter 8.6; and the experience of the participants responding to lack of time resources Chapter 6.8.1, Chapter 7.1.3)

- the support of occasional specific assistance from a facilitator who has particular competencies in the area of affective or emotional learning and imaginal or presentational learning that is needed to properly support the propositional and the practical aspects of learning to take intentional actions
  
  (Heron, 1999)  
  (My experience, especially Chapter 8.6; participants’ acknowledgement of need of the external agent for other kinds of resourcing support Chapter 7.1, Chapter 8.5)

My experience reflects findings indicated in the literature: that the change required for an individual needs to be specific to that individual, so the learning needs to be self-directed, and to be particularised to what that individual actually identifies that they want and need to learn

  (Argyris, 1993; Heron, 1999; Schön, 1987)  
  (Chapter 7.3.5; literature input to the design Chapter 3.2.7).

Learning to change in these areas is not just an individual enterprise, however (Mezirow, 1991). It operates most effectively when peers are engaging in the same sort of learning, even though it might be directed at slightly different emphases in each individual case

  (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Heron & Reason, 2001; Schön, 1991; Whetten & Cameron, 1995)  
  (Literature input to the design Chapter 3.2.7; some hints in participants’ experience Chapter 6.2-6.6; my experience and perhaps
more from the lack of face-to-face peer interactions and the resort to
the literature in that lack Chapters 3-8).

The elements of self-assessment, and work with the particular, suggest that engagement
in an effective process of inquiry will be a significant part of any learning to change
(Drawn from the indications of the design effectiveness Chapters 5-8,
and the logic of the informing explanatory understandings).

This synthesis helped me understand that expecting great, and obvious change, in the
relatively short time available in the project program (40 hours over 6-12 months), was
unrealistic. It also helped me understand that any change observed would need to be
tested in a longer time frame than that provided in my inquiry design (Chapter 6
summary). While I espoused the view that my design was not a ‘quick fix’, (Chapter
3.2.7), in-practice my design did not sufficiently account for the timeframe required for
the difficult and complex nature of the change I was focusing on
(Chapter 6.8-6.9, Chapter 7.1)

Given the complexity of change at the learning to change level, it is unlikely that clear
and obvious dimensions of change will be able to be devised to effectively demonstrate
or evaluate such change
(So the failure of my evaluation design, Chapter 3.4 and Chapter 4.1,
can be considered to be entirely appropriate, and the alternative route
undertaken as indicated in Chapter 4 sought to accommodate that
failure).

Mezirow’s point that the basis of such evaluation needs to be reviewed (Mezirow, 1991,
p.220) has much more cogency for me. Given that my implicit expectations were
unrealistic, the significance of the findings, where the participants were able to move in
acting (Chapter 5.2.7, Chapter 5.3.7), in response to the design, both from its various
inputs and its level of implementation, and that this capacity to make an effective
change surprised them (Chapter 6, and for details see Chapter 6.6.4 and Chapter 6.8.3),
becomes greater than the credit I was giving them. I need to recognise my tendency to
negate the effective while I focus on the perplexities and surprises that stimulate
ongoing reflective inquiry (Loughran, 2004b, p.26).

My deeper understanding of the reliance on the element of inquiry involved in learning
to change, brought me to the issue of what is involved in learning to inquire, and
especially when the learning that needs to be changed is that which has been developed or accepted as the outcome of inquiry. For this kind of learning to change, the process involves moving to another level where the inquiry process itself becomes the subject of inquiry and learning. Such a realisation also meant that I should examine my own processes: might inquiry be one of my practices where I needed to learn to change? (Chapter 4.1.4; 4.2-4.7; and when I did examine my inquiry practice I found a ‘resilient frame’ – Chapter 7.3.4)

### 9.4 Inquiry of practice, in-practice

As I thought about what is involved in improving inquiry in practice or a professional, I recognised that the issues that arise in a professional practice run the gamut of the practitioner’s activity. Inquiry must cover the same range, to increase knowledge application and to improve the quality of interpersonal engagements with clients and others to accomplish objectives, perhaps even up to the level of taking political action. Further, inquiry itself is a part of the professional’s toolbox, and needs to be open to challenge if the effectiveness of the practitioner’s inquiry processes is to be increased. As a part of a professional’s toolbox, inquiry is used to deal with material that is non-routine (Baskett et al., 1992c) for the individual practitioner, something where a practitioner does not have a ready and effective answer. Similarly, inquiry is part of providing quality advice to a client – investigating to diagnose the problem and investigating to find the solution, often from a range of alternatives, that fits the specific circumstances: of time, of locality, of context, of feasibility, for the individual client. Inquiry is part of the process that the professional uses, to learn what is to be learned from, and by, experience.

My thinking then proceeded along the argument lines that have developed in this thesis: Improving a process of inquiry involves knowing or finding out what is the process of inquiry to be improved. This is the essence of the self-awareness process, and the issue-awareness aspect: it is problem framing, for the individual practitioner. The second aspect of improving a process of inquiry involves ascertaining: Is the process used the appropriate form of inquiry for the question being inquired into? This is an evaluative process. Having settled which process is appropriate, the practitioner may
then need to learn to change, to learn a new way of inquiring. It is at this point that the complex which is ‘learning’, ‘inquiry’, and ‘evaluation’ comes into operation.

Turning then to the literature to check my understanding indicated that inquiry is a significant part of our human existence and, as such, suffers the risk of being ‘taken for granted’. Furthermore, our inquiry practice is established quite early in life (Gardner, 1993, pp.xxii-xxiii). Inquiring into the nature of inquiry, at a level that moves beyond the current dominant tradition, and at a level that is informed by the best traditions of inquiry, is a relatively recent development.

In summary, my review of the literature matched my experience in this inquiry, and enhanced my understanding by finding:

- There are multiple methods of conducting inquiry
  
  (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba, 1990; Patton, 2002; Reason & Bradbury, 2001)
  
  (My experience resulting from greater exposure to the literature generated by my stimulating concern – Chapter 2-4, Chapter 3.2.7 for action learning/research).

- While there might be multiple methods, unless an inquirer is aware of the important link between inquiry method and the kind of knowledge being sought and the phenomenon being studied and the intrinsic values associated with the phenomenon being investigated, and a link which needs to be honoured in the choice of a method to undertake an investigation, then the inquiry undertaken may be at risk of inherent, internal invalidity
  
  (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997; Schön, 1991; Toulmin, 1996)
  
  (My developed awareness from my extended work with more extensive literature and trying to work to open the flexibility of my resilient frame – Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 7.3.4, Chapter 3.2.7 for action learning/research)

- For inquiry for practice, to deliver actionable knowledge while still remaining engaged in practice, an effective and practical inquiry process (something like action research) is needed
  
  (Argyris, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Toulmin, 1996)
  
  (Chapters 2-4, especially Chapter 3.2.7 for work on action learning/research)
For inquiry into the elements of practice that involve interpersonal interactions, the inquiry needs persons to do the study, as well as recognising that it is persons who are being studied

(Heron & Reason, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2001b).

For inquiry of persons by persons, managed reflexivity will be a significant component

(Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

(Part of my experience in Chapter 8.6)

Furthermore, developing a process that harnesses collaborative work and cooperative effort effectively (authentic, uncoerced, consensus exploration) will assist the participants to manage bias and complexity, and be respectful of the personhood of the participants, in their respective roles

(Heron, 1992; Heron & Reason, 1997; Ravetz, 1987; Schön, 1991)

(The intention of my design, but not fully experienced by myself or the participants – Chapter 3, Chapter 4.1 and Chapter 7-8; Chapter 3.1 for design intent; Chapter 3.2.2 and 3.2.7 for details).

Considering how a practice of inquiry might be improved becomes a matter of learning to change, as enunciated previously. It involves inquiring while also operating at a level where how one is going about inquiring, and how one is evaluating that inquiry while going about it, is in view.

Other aspects of working with one’s inquiry processes, while practising as a professional, has involved the following:

- Inquiry about practice, for practice improvement, was conducted in the midst of practice

  (Argyris, 1993; Kressel, 1997; Toulmin, 1996)

  (Chapter 5-8; Chapter 3.1 for design intent, Chapter 4 for indication of action, and action outcomes at self-study level).

- One outcome of learning from such inquiry has been the recognition that there are many ways of inquiring, and that the choice of inquiry approach in a particular instance, in-practice, needs to be actionable knowledge

  (Argyris, 1993; Patton, 2002; Toulmin, 1996)
As an inquirer, I needed to ask myself: what is the kind of inquiry that has an appropriate match with the nature of the phenomenon being investigated, and the kind of knowledge being sought, and how is it best done in ways that acknowledge intrinsic values associated with the nature of the phenomenon being investigated?

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Heron & Reason, 1997; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Schön, 1991)

For inquiry to improve practice for a practitioner, the inquiry form needs to be appropriate for inquiry of humans and may include self-inquiry

(Heron & Reason, 1997; Kressel, 1997)

(Chapter 2, Chapter 7.3-7.4; preparation by way of development of self-awareness Chapter 3.2.1)

As such it is inquiry that needs to be able to deal with the ‘complex, the indeterminate, the unique and the conflictual’ situations that arise in practice

(Ravetz, 1987; Schön, 1995, 1991)

(Chapters 4-8; prepared for by way of design Chapter 3.1)

It needs to be able to deal with reflexivity and bias

(Heron, 1992; Heron & Reason, 2001; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Kressel, 1997; Reason & Bradbury, 2001b)

(Chapter 4, Chapter 6.8)

Action research, with its iterative approach and its openness to different methods in different cycles, provides a generic framework for in-practice inquiry

(Argyris, 1993; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Toulmin, 1996)

(Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4; Chapter 3.2.7 action research; Chapter 4.6, Chapter 4.7.8 for self-awareness about responsiveness to iterative cycle including action; Chapter 7.2 for my implementation in-practice)

Cooperative inquiry, when it is able to use an effective dialectic process to help manage reflexivity and complexity, and call into account how the values
expressed in the inquiry method respect the humanness of the inquiry subject, is recommended for practice inquiry, including self-inquiry

(Argyris, 1993; Heron, 1992; Heron & Reason, 1997, 2001; Ravetz, 1987; Reason & Bradbury, 2001b; Schön, 1991)

(Chapter 7, Chapter 8; Chapter 3.2.7 for action learning/research in collaboration or cooperation; Chapter 4.6 for managing inquiry limitations; Chapter 5.2.4, Chapter 5.3.4 for the establishment of free choice in the without prejudice sessions, and for continuing engagement with the process; Chapter 5.3.7.4 for an instance where participants respected others’ free choice)

As I tried to facilitate the task of learning to inquire, and to improve inquiry, I endeavoured to have all the conditions of learning to change, noted above, in place (Chapter 3, Chapter 5-8). I noticed how demanding this proved to be (Chapter 4, Chapter 7.4). I also realised that I needed to have a developed understanding of the principles operating in the many different kinds of inquiry that can be used, and that one of my important tasks, as facilitator, was to help the participants recognise the basis of their choice of match of inquiry to problem being investigated. I have realised that this aspect of facilitation takes the facilitator and the participants into the area of becoming aware about the nature of evaluation and the role that a practitioner’s values play in evaluation, in inquiry and in learning to change (Chapter 9). That remains as a task before me, to be attempted in further practice applications. During this inquiry I recognised that I was dependent on my understandings from my resilient frame, and on the process of learning-by-doing as I endeavoured to implement what I understood reflective research of practice to be (Chapter 4). I also realised how the resilience of my formative frame impacted on my learning-by-doing (Chapter 7.3.4).

This synthesis helped me understand that while the professional development activity did assist the participants with the development of awareness of their thinking, the process of the intervention, with the external agent, and my form of facilitation, with its roots in teacher-designed-and-directed educative opportunities, did not encourage the sense of ownership needed for, and in, any cooperative, participatory, way of undertaking inquiry (Chapter 7.1.1, Chapter 8 summary).

This synthesis also reminded me that a facilitator, helping participants with the task of learning to inquire and to improve inquiry, needs to help them recognise the difficulty
and the complexity involved in making a change, and to validate the time taken to do that. Since I had not realised all of that, to this level of fullness during preparation or while in the implementation stage, then it was quite impossible for me to provide that kind of leadership at the time of the action (Chapter 9). This synthesis also challenged me to look again at my conception of reflective research of practice, and how it operates, and its appropriateness to any particular application (Chapter 9.6).

9.5 Developing awareness of evaluation and the role of a practitioner’s values in learning to change and conducting effective inquiry

From the processes of (1) asking myself what is the learning to change that I was looking for in the in-action testing of my professional development activity design, and (2) reflectively engaging with the literature of the field, I have discovered (adjusted my conceptual framework to include the understanding) that learning to change involves inquiry. In exploring the nature of the inquiry required to provide the valid information about what to change and how to change it, I have discovered that part of learning to change involves taking an action that is different, and that in deciding to act, a practitioner is involved in making a practical judgement, and that the process of making practical judgements, to be able to be improved, needs to be open to evaluation (part of my process in Chapter 3.1-3.3).

As I have found that ‘learning’ is not monolithic, nor is ‘inquiry’ monolithic, in a like manner I have found that ‘evaluation’ is not monolithic. The nature of the phenomenon, its multiplicity of form, is hidden by the words with which we label it – the singulars: learning, inquiry, evaluation. The nature of the phenomenon, and its implicit difference from other phenomena, designated by the use of distinctly different terms, is by no means guaranteed. Here is part of the sociolinguistic distortion that Mezirow speaks of that I am learning to deal with in this learning journey (Mezirow, 1991, pp.130-138). Any sociolinguistic distortion is also likely to create a situation where an epistemic distortion can develop, especially the paradox and absurdities that develop from any misunderstanding of logical levels (Bateson, 1972, pp.278-308). Since evaluation is a process, like learning and inquiry, like thinking, managing, teaching, watching, and so on, at least two logical levels of evaluation exist: evaluation itself, and the meta-level of evaluating evaluation.
Further, while a discipline of evaluation exists, where techniques of evaluation are made explicit, ‘natural’ evaluation also exists as an embedded and tacit practice of all people, and in its embedness and tacitness, the assumptions underlying an in-practice evaluation, as well as good description of what it is, continues to elude me. I have not been able to discern descriptors in the literature that help me understand my own practice. However, I also concede that until I know what I do not know, I am unlikely to see it if it is there (Dewey, 1933, p.165).

The nearest I have come is in responding affirmatively to Donald Schön’s description of ‘reflective practice’ involved in designing as ‘multiple evaluations’ conducted in a sequential way, of moves from a repertoire of design domains (Schön, 1983, pp.76-104, especially p.102). In my first reading of Schön’s Reflective Practitioner I was cognitively busy trying to match Schön’s descriptions with my own practice experience. In that context I did not notice the remarks about ‘multiple evaluations’. It took two more readings, and a focal attention now honed by my experiential difficulties with doing a practice evaluation within my resilient frame, and fretting at the concept of ‘evaluation’ and of ‘reflective practice’ before I noticed the linking of the two (some of my starting out concepts for ‘evaluation’ are conveyed in Chapter 3.4; and some of my practice experience of ‘evaluation’ is recorded in Chapter 4.1). Initially, because I was encountering different terms, spoken about differently in any number of texts, I was treating the words as representing different phenomena – an example of my experience of a rather specialised form of sociolinguistic distortion.

Now that I ‘see’ this relationship, and have been enabled to see similar instances of this kind of sociolinguistic distortion, and recognised the nature of levels of a process (Bateson, 1972), I am beginning to be more comfortable about how I might bound my understanding of how a practitioner goes about developing practice knowledge. Earlier, I noted that Schön described ‘reflective practice’ as ‘research’ (Schön, 1983, p.68), and that my terminology of ‘reflective research of practice’ might represent a tautology (Allen, 1998). At the time, I held onto the ‘research’ component, to emphasis the ‘systematic inquiry’ aspect of the process. I find now, that what I have been majoring on in this inquiry is ‘research of practice’, and at times I have lost sight of the ‘reflective’ distinction (Chapter 9.6). It is only when I look again at other practices,
like narrative inquiry, program evaluation, or grounded theorising, for example, that I can more readily discern the ‘reflective’ distinction that I want to make: working on the practitioner’s thinking which is focused on practical action outcomes, and which mobilises multiple evaluations from a repertoire of evaluative options, for the purpose of taking practical action.

I also seem to have come to a point in my considerations of what is involved in evaluation, and inquiry, and learning to change, where my current view – that evaluation is both a mode of inquiry and the basis on which judgements in inquiry are made – brings me into an area of current debate in the field: Is evaluation research? (personal discussions with Susan Goff, Bronwyn Stafford, 2004). Evaluation, like inquiry and learning, has a number of logical levels. How to be aware of that, and clear about which of the levels I am operating in, and talking about, is the task before me.

Looking again at the text of Chapter 4, I find that I can identify at least 21 different evaluative criteria and processes that I have been able to express while I have undertaken the conduct of the inquiry:

- A particular evaluation design (formal) and its effectiveness – I have more to learn here (Chapter 4.1)
- Its embeddedness – for me and for the participants (Chapter 4.1.2, 4.1.3)
- Category determination (Chapter 4.3)
- The use of multiple sources and how they are used in this instance (Chapter 4.3, Chapter 4.6)
- The use of compare-and-contrast, including the hierarchical weighting given to the most direct source, the participants’ own words (Chapter 4.4)
- The role of pattern-making and of surprise (Chapter 4.4)
- My awareness of the impact of a change in expression when transferring records from one form to another (Chapter 4.4)
- The distinction of ‘lived experience and contemporaneous meaning-making’ from other processes (Chapter 4.4)
- Story development, and referencing, and my tacit criteria that others describe as unusually or unbelievably objective (Chapter 4.4)
- The role of ‘practical’ as a criterion for me (Chapter 4.5)
- The role of vocabulary/category/ontology (Chapter 4.5)
- The potential of oversimplification by rounds of successive convergence (Chapter 4.5)
• Attending to others’ or multiple voices (Chapter 4.6)
• Using multiple techniques (Chapter 4.6)
• The value I place on personal competence (Chapter 4.6)
• Observation of my process includes the work of attending to ‘the next layer’ (Chapter 4.7, Chapter 4.7.9)
• The role of experience-to-field comparison (Chapter 4.7.4)
• The potential of punctuation, selecting a slice of time, to generate an oversimplification (Chapter 4.7.5)
• The role of selection for presentation for communicability, but also potentially risking oversimplification (Chapter 4.7.6)
• The role of having a ‘map-making’ analogy or metaphor for the process (Chapter 4.7.7)
• How I use ‘doing’ to test ‘learning’ (Chapter 4.7.8)

As I looked back on the activities associated with how I conducted my in-action testing, and what I was evaluating and how, I began to discern that many of the activities I was engaging in fell within the field of qualitative research (Chapter 4.7.9). Just which of these activities might constitute reflective research of practice, was less clear. Despite having no clear synthesis of the nature of evaluation, compared with the syntheses I have of ‘learning to change’ and ‘inquiring into inquiry’, I need to round off this current inquiry, and by looking more closely at what I have been doing as I have been learning-by-doing while I have undertaken what I was conceiving as ‘reflective research of practice’, and to clarify any way in which my understanding of the concept has changed.


9.6 Reflective research of practice for self as practitioner

My more nuanced understanding of the nature of inquiry, and of inquiry into practice, in-practice, including inquiry into the practitioner’s thinking that is informing action, suggests that reflective research of practice can never be a singular, undifferentiated activity. Consequently, there can be no simple formulation for evaluating the quality of reflective research of practice. The methods employed to conduct any *research of practice* need to be various, so that there can be a match of what is being inquired into, by what method, and with a view to the kind of knowledge that needs to be formed by such a process, including consideration of the intrinsic values being applied to humanness in the way such knowledge is developed. Where the reflective research of practice involves moving into the (reflective) thinking area and the thinking-action complex of a person’s practice, self-inquiry is essential. The quality of the self-inquiry is enhanced by using iterative cycles, in a collaborative or cooperative inquiry in the company of other self-inquiring practitioners (Chapter 9.4).

My experience, as recorded in Chapter 4, and my ongoing post-experience engagement with the literature, to help me clarify what I have been doing, suggests that a better way of conceiving what I have been doing and thinking is to represent it as a form of practitioner self-study, and preparing participants for openness to self-study (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004). As far as data collection and analysis processes for *reflective* research of practice are concerned, a first step is the collection and analysis of data to allow inquirers to determine which thinking-action unit needs to be focused on, since it is either ineffective or it is effective and another inquirer is interested in knowing why it is effective, and comparing it to their own.

A second step is enunciating the thinking informing the action. Enunciating thinking relating to action (reflection) is usually understood to be written work – journaling, say – but can also include the answering of others’ questions, and describing and explaining thinking processes, orally, when in the company of others. The data, in my view, involve some story telling – for example the practice anecdote – or analogy, or the use of metaphor, and recognising and exploring these ‘knots of relevance’ (Bateson, 1979, p.13) for what they constitute about practice knowledge is important. How oral data are collected and analysed may depend on the circumstances. Others have
supplemented written records by using audio recordings (Argyris, 1993; Kressel, 1997) and video recordings for teaching practice (Whitehead, 2003), and the latter can capture more of the presentational knowledge component as well as the conceptual or propositional knowledge component of the practice knowledge. In the instance of this inquiry, my move to audio-recording, for the capture of more detailed practice reflections, was more a response to the lack of time for the participants to do their own written reflective work, and their relative inexperience with written reflective work (Chapter 5.2.4). Since it did not reflect ‘usual practice’ conditions, it did not become a significant part of my practice (Chapter 3.4). Sharing the process of analysis with peer inquirers may also unearth confirming and disconfirming data from the experiences of others, as well as others’ ways of thinking about their action. In this inquiry, evidence was collected of fleeting examples of the interaction of one participant’s thinking with the oral inputs of others (Chapter 6.5, Chapter 8.3). I was unable to identify an occasion where this mutual confirming or disconfirming, and extended analysis of practice knowledge, developed to any depth in interactions amongst peer participants, but that may also have been impacted by the frame in which the inquiry was conducted, and my leadership.

The third step in any *reflective* research of practice, for practice improvement, involves the analysis of the thinking-action complex for effectiveness. The formal analysis of action effectiveness is usually covered by the discipline of evaluation. The analysis of thinking effectiveness includes the exercise of appropriate processes to engage with epistemic, psychologic, sociolinguistic distortions and may well involve the use of social critical theorising inputs and techniques. It includes the comparison of theoretical models and the evaluation of their relative effectiveness in-practice. But it also appears that beyond the disciplines of logic, and dialectic discourse about how a practitioner frames knowledge and knowing (eg cause-and-effect, systemic processes, etc), practitioners are also involved in the work required to identify their values-in-use, a process that requires separating the actual from the espoused (Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.3.4, Chapter 7.4).

In this thesis I have tried to identify what demonstrates quality reflective research of practice. The literature of reflection and reflective practice has been useful for identifying what is ‘different’/ ‘significant’ / ‘distinctive’ about *reflective* research of
practice. The key to such research is the emphasis on reflection, reflection as both content and process.

Reflection as content
My work has confirmed to me that reflection is a cognitive process with a number of phases, focused on coming to a conclusion for the purpose of action, with various activities designed to survey and test premises and argument, and where judgment is exercised and understanding developed by the interaction of ‘facts’ and ‘meaning’ for the inquirer (Dewey, 1933, pp.102-118, p.4, p.12, p.77, p.165). Furthermore, reflection, as an experiential process, is far more than just the ‘rational’ and ‘individual’ (Boud et al., 1993; Boud et al., 1985). As an experiential learning process it: involves relationship and the feelings generated (Main, 1985) and can use a co-counseling model to capture these elements (Knights, 1985); works with personal autobiographical material (Powell, 1985); requires systematic documentation to capture subtle change (Walker, 1985); allows the learner to address aspects of unlearning (Brew, 1993); acknowledges how feelings stimulate thinking (Brookfield, 1993); can draw in social contextual information and how that challenges premises (Criticos, 1993; Thorpe, 1993; Usher, 1993); allows participants to work with their relationships and to renegotiate relationships to more effectively use team resources (Kasl, Dechant, & Marsick, 1993); needs to mobilise focus to usefully interrogate experience (Mason, 1993); recognises different roles for participants in group process (Miller, 1993); provides for the work needed on internal processes (Mulligan, 1993); allows for the honouring of affect and being honest with affect (Postle, 1993). Further, reflection is a significant part of any transformative learning process (Mezirow, 1991, pp.99-117) and reflection is itself a practice and how it is practised, by others, varies (Dick, 1998; Fendler, 2003; Loughran, 1996; Lucas, 1996; Schön, 1991) (Chapter 3.2.7).

Reflection as process
In my professional development activity I used reflection throughout the process, both of my own work and with the participants in the context of the activity (Chapter 3.2.3, Chapter 3.2.7, Chapter 7.2, Chapter 7.3, Chapter 6.4, Chapter 6.1.1-6.6.1 and 6.8.1). We focused on the study of our practice (participants – Chapter 5; myself – Chapter 4, Chapter 4.7, Chapter 4.7.9, Chapter 7.3, Chapter 7.4, Chapter 8.6) and acknowledged

Speaking for myself, my self-study of my practice honoured my experience and my learning from it (Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.3-7.4, Chapter 8.6). Schön speaks of ‘giving the practitioner reason’ – acknowledging the practitioner’s expertise as expertise to be honoured, and dealt with in its own terms (Schön, 1991, p.5). Kressel speaks about the contribution of different levels of practice (novice or expert) in helping understand what is going on in the development of expertise in-practice (Kressel, 1997, pp.151-2).

My reflective approach honoured the specific context of practice, and had the purpose of developing usable knowledge for my practice context (Dewey, 1933; Kressel, 1997; Schön, 1983, 1987) (the intention of the design – Chapter 3.1). I noted the differences between the two groups and reflected on the impact of context (Chapter 4.3, Chapter 5.2-5.3, Chapter 7.1).

My reflective approach noted the elements of my practice: thinking (ideas, causal or relational explanatory models) (Chapter 2-3); action (behaviour) (Chapter 4-8; Chapter 5); and affect (emotional response) (Chapter 4.7, Chapter 7.3, Chapter 7.4), that is to say my reflective approach provided a mechanism for handling more than the rational/cognitive/verbalised and verbalisable (Boud et al., 1993; Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985b, 1985c; Boud et al., 1985; Boud & Walker, 1993).

My reflective approach involved exploration of my premises, in whatever domain of learning the reflective work was operating (Mezirow, 1991, p.110). For example: inquiry premises (Chapter 4.3-4.7, Chapter 6.1.4, Chapter 6.6.4); premises about reflection developed from interaction with the literature (Chapter 7.3); premises about learning to change (Chapters 3-8); premises embedded in the design (Chapter 3.1-3.2); premises and implications of the design (Chapter 3.3.1); evaluation premises (Chapter 9.5/Chapter 4).

But I am also aware that I have recognised reflection in this thesis more by content than by process. If I were asked to describe the process of reflection then I would say, with Schön, that it is multiple evaluations, by an actor who has the necessity to take some
future action in view; the multiple evaluations are conducted in varying sequences to test an explanatory understanding of the phenomenon and an actor’s interaction with that phenomenon, and with a view to being more effective; being more effective includes dealing with the phenomenon appropriately (my conception of ‘justice’ – a match of fitness) and elegantly (which includes the elements of parsimony and artistry) as well as getting expected and positive outcomes to progress the matter to solution and having a sense of satisfaction in such mastery. If I have addressed the process of reflection, in the way I understand it now, then it is probably demonstrated by that which is embedded within this report. As process, it tends to disappear from analytical and aware focal attention, and particularly as competence with it increases. (Chapter 9.5, Chapter 8.6)

Identifying reflective work, in-practice
Reflective research of practice, where the practice is focused on interpersonal interactions, operates within the realm of ‘communicative’ learning (Mezirow, 1991, p.97). The reasoning involved in such learning is metaphoric-abductive reasoning where sense is made of the unknown by making connections in experience, both of one’s own experiences over time, and with the experience of others (Chapter 8.6) (Mezirow, 1991, pp.84-5). Findings from such an inquiry will be most effective and informative when formulated in communicative terms: metaphor and story, anecdotes of experiential incidents (Bateson, 1979, p.13; Mezirow, 1991, p.221; Schön, 1991, pp.344-6). I began to appreciate this, and noted that I need to mobilise both my awareness of it in others’ interactions, and to develop and share my own reflective anecdotes, when continuing to engage in this kind of practice in future, to be more effective (Chapter 6.7, Chapter 7.3, Chapter 7.4).

Limitations of reflective work, in-practice
However, in engaging with reflective research of practice, it became clear to me that at a number of points of my inquiry into my practices of facilitation and inquiry I experienced incongruence between thinking and acting (Chapter 6.5.1, Chapter 7.4, Chapter 8.6). One of those points of incongruence was with the practice of reflective work to improve my own practice. It was staying with reflective work, despite this early set back, which has provided me with some of the wherewithal to overcome this incongruence. My closer study of what was involved indicated that to deal with such
incongruence requires (1) significant investment of time; (2) focusing on intensive reflective work with the person’s practice; (3) seeking out a variety of different kinds of input from external parties, at both the big picture level and at the micro-process level; (4) trialling others’ suggestions about how to enact or understand the process being investigated; (5) having some mechanism for evaluating performance and discerning change – either some external input or some documentation of before and after (most often captured in the intensive reflective work) (Chapter 8.6).

9.7 **Key outcomes of the inquiry – Contributing to Learning to Change**

Bringing together the various aspects of the findings in-practice, and my reconceptualising as I sought to understand those findings, leads me to the following summary remarks about learning to change, and facilitating learning to change.

*The Big Picture*

1. Learning to change is difficult, complex, and takes time. It involves an effective inquiry process. It depends also on an understanding of how we evaluate a proposed action and an awareness of what we value in making choices between options of action.

2. To facilitate learning to change involves attending to the complexity, affirming the difficulty, and validating the time required to undertake the inquiry involved in developing a congruent thinking-action complex that constitutes the desired change.

*The Next Level of Detail – The Conduct and Conditions of Effective Inquiry*

3. Effective inquiry leading to action is based on a number of key elements: multiple sources of valid information, processed by free and informed choice, and followed by a commitment to act on the findings.

4. Collaborative or cooperative endeavour, in this kind of practice inquiry, is needed.

5. For effective collaborative or cooperative endeavour, tools that increase a sense of agency (self-awareness tools and developing self-awareness by an intentional structured reflective process) and activities that develop an understanding of what constitutes effective inquiry, need to be used with the group to expedite the
processes of building openness and trust, and building a culture of effective inquiry to enable them to engage in high quality effective inquiry of their own practices and to be able to keep on exploring the nature of that inquiry.

6. The commitment to free, informed choice and the valuing of diversity as a source of alternative information including alternative processes and criteria of valuing, is a concomitant and pre-requisite factor for effective inquiry and learning to change. Such commitments are also part of the necessary conditions for formation of an effective collaborative or cooperative group able to conduct such inquiry, and to keep effective inquiry alive to its own need to be using its experience in learning to change.

**Role of Values and Evaluation**

7. The purpose of examining values-in-use and explanatory theories-in-use is evaluative. The inquiring individuals need to determine whether their values-in-use and explanatory theories-in-use still meet their needs in being effective. Where the values and congruent explanatory theories do meet their needs in being effective, the values and congruent explanatory theories can be affirmed as their intentional values and in-use theories. Where the values are found to be not what the practitioner aspires to or the explanatory theories are found to be less effective than the practitioner intends, or where combinations of in-use-values and in-use-theories are not congruent, then values, or explanatory theories, or both, need to be changed so that greater congruence between espoused and in-use is achieved. The knowing and congruence developed by such a process will contribute to confidence to act in pursuing reaffirmed goals, in more consciously appropriate ways. Undertaking the process of such inquiry and evaluation, and becoming aware of its limitations, as well as the limitations and qualifications to the knowledge formed, will build knowledge about the nature and limitations of inquiry that may contribute to managing the uncertain and the complex.

8. Work on understanding the values basis of affect, or an affective response to an interaction, is an important component of learning to change.
Role of Agency

9. A firm sense of agency is required for an actor involved in learning to change, and where such agency needs to be re-formed, work with self-awareness contributes to the necessary sense of agency.

10. Where a sense of agency needs to be re-formed or developed, an understanding of effective inquiry to engage in effective learning to change will be required, that is to say: an ineffective inquiry process may be one of the factors limiting the sense of agency.

11. Within an effective inquiry process, and with the necessary sense of agency, a practitioner needs to focus attention on specific elements of the practice and settle, in the first instance, on the work needed to make incremental gains. A practitioner needs to remain immersed in the practice to continue to try and operate the multiple evaluations on the multiple dimensions that constitute the whole of practice for the professional. However, the practitioner also needs to recognise that the whole practice is a complex of components and expecting to be able to work on change in all aspects at the one time is unrealistic. In these circumstances, focusing on an element at a time, and systematically working with the elements that make up the suite of an effective practice, represents a realistic change program.

Role of Reflective Work

12. Reflective work is essential for the enunciation of a practitioner’s thinking that is informing a practice action, when such enunciation is required to engage in the kind of inquiry needed to improve practice.

13. Reflective work itself also needs to be focused on, and a practitioner needs to be encouraged to develop its descriptive, analytical and critical aspects.

14. Reflective work is not limited to written journaling processes, but for long term use needs to be documented in an effective and efficient way.
9.8 Closing the circle – well, almost

I have come nearly full circle, or at least to the point in the hermeneutic spiral where I am heading in the same direction on another loop of the spiral. I have tested and re-affirmed some of my inquiry processes; whether they should remain designated as ‘reflective research of practice’, or whether they should be redesignated as ‘practitioner self-study’, or ‘living educational theory’, or some other term yet to be devised by another creative practitioner, where I recognise the match with my own experience and practice, is still an open question for me. I have become aware of other elements of my inquiry processes and their inadequacy in some inquiry situations, and their resilience in the face of learning to change. I am ready for more inquiry of my practice, and inquiry informed by this work. My readiness for more activity and inquiry is now founded on a greater appreciation of the nature of research of practice, and of the complex that is learning/inquiry/evaluation. My readiness has been accomplished by the development of my self-awareness, which has happened by intensive, structured and systematic reflective work on my thinking-action complex, including attending to the subtle and the contextual aspects of both myself, others, and our interactions and understandings, in-practice.

It is my hope that I have now told the story and communicated the experience in such a way that peers in the field might find it relatable to their experience. If the documented experience and theorising is relatable, and especially if it represents something different to their experience, then I trust it may also raise some issues about their own practice, and stimulate the kind of creative associations that it has been my privilege to experience and benefit from, when engaging with the work of others in the field before me.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Heron, J. (1996c). Quality as Primacy of the Practical. *Qualitative Inquiry, 2*(1), 41-.


Contributing to Learning to Change


Glossary

In the course of conducting my professional development activity design, a number of different frames of seeing the world, or meaning schemes, are used to help explore the differences that operate for persons, in their approach to meaning making, and as they develop explanatory models for situations they might be engaging in and with. These frames, so far as I have been able to discern, have been developed using a variety of combinations of polar pairs. In using these frames, the intention is to begin to pay attention to a practitioner’s thinking, and to identify their operational preferences and to offer/raise alternatives, and to find others who operate from an alternative position, or combination of preferences making up a world view. The frames begin to give practitioners alternative categories and an expanded ontology for looking at their thinking-action complex, and can provide different options to consider when trying to deal with the indeterminate, to use Donald Schön’s way of describing what might be needed to help a practitioner operate more effectively (Schön, 1995, 1991). The frames are by no means comprehensive in their capacity to explain anything or everything. Nor are they considered, in my mind, to be indisputable. They are accessible in that they are generally available in the public arena, have a supportive empirical base, and have been explored in the documented work of others. A freer-form of such structuring of our worlds as we attempt to understand them, by the devices of compare and contrast, of categorising to determine in- and out- (= not in), is found in George Kelly’s idea of a personal construct, and the repertory grid is another useful tool for exploring how an individual practitioner is addressing a current practice concern (Candy, 1990). Some of how (and why) I use these frames is conveyed in Chapter 3.2.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a tool developed in order to make Jung’s theory of psychological types accessible.

It explores the expression of personality along four dichotomies:
Extraversion (E) – Introversion (I) – being the attitudes or orientations of energy
- Extraversion (E) – Directing energy mainly toward the outer world of people and objects
- Introversion (I) – Directing energy mainly toward the inner world of experiences and ideas
Sensing (S) – Intuition (N) – functions or processes of perception
- Sensing (S) – Focusing mainly on what can be perceived by the five senses
- Intuition (N) – Focusing mainly on perceiving patterns and interrelationships
Thinking (T) – Feeling (F) – functions or processes of judging
- Thinking (T) – basing conclusions on logical analysis with a focus on objectivity or detachment
- Feeling (F) – basing conclusions on personal or social values with a focus on understanding and harmony
Judging (J) – Perceiving (P) – attitudes or orientations toward dealing with the outside world
- Judging (J) – Preferring the decisiveness and closure that result from dealing with the outer world using one of the Judging processes (Thinking or Feeling)
Perceiving (P) – Preferring the flexibility and spontaneity that results from dealing with the outer world using one of the Perceiving processes (Sensing or Intuition)

The combination of the four dichotomies generate 16 different personality types, as indicative combinations of preferences, for example ENFP; ISTJ; ESFP, INTJ, etc.

The combination of the functions or processes of perception (gathering information) with the functions or processes of judging (evaluating information) generate 4 different cognitive styles NT, NF, ST, SF, with N preferring abstraction over S concreteness, and N tending to be convergent thinkers while S tend to be divergent thinkers; and T tending to solve problems by focus on appropriate methods and logical progressions giving a continuous culture, operating consistently within existing patterns of thought; and F tending to find problem solutions using analogies or seeing unusual relationships between the problem and past experience giving a discontinuous culture.

Other combinations of pairs suggest distinctive ways of preferring to respond to change (E/I and J/P); to use information (E/I and N/S); to respond to and give leadership (T/F and J/P).

(Briggs Myers, 1998, pp.32-34; Briggs Myers et al., 1998, pp.6, 22-33; Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.42-50)

**Tolerance of Ambiguity (TOA)**

Budner’s Tolerance of Ambiguity provides a series of questions that ask about a person’s level of agreement or disagreement with statements which then relate to one of three components of ambiguity: novelty; complexity; insolubility. The scoring is between high and low levels of tolerance on one or other of the factors, and eventually giving a composite score for Tolerance of Ambiguity.

Insolubility provides an opening to measure the reflective judgement and associated epistemology that is operative in the practitioner’s thinking processes, and raises the issue of its potential development that King and Kitchener discuss (King & Kitchener, 1994).

Complexity is a component that others associate with the ‘practice’ context (Kressel, 1997; Ravetz, 1987; Schön, 1995).

Novelty is an aspect of openness to change, that may have a link with the J/P dimension in MBTI, and change is considered to be a significant factor as a source of conflict (Acland, 1990).

Budner Tolerance of Ambiguity (TOA) tool is available from (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.53, 685)

**Locus of Control (LOC)**

Locus of control seeks to identify a person’s attitude to the extent to which they consider they are in control of their own destinies, as they interact with their environment. The two poles are internal locus of control (‘I was the cause of this success or failure’).
external locus of control (‘Something, or someone, else caused the success or failure’)

Locus of Control, together with Tolerance of Ambiguity, are considered to be significant dimensions indicating an orientation toward change. There is also an indication that LOC is capable of being changed as a result of learning from experience (whereas there is no such indication with TOA) (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.76-79). There is an indication that LOC and TOA have an interactive role to play in stress and stress management (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, p.144)

Sourced from (Whetten & Cameron, 1995, pp.50, 685)

**X-Y Human Values**

The X-Y Human Values tool identifies assumptions made about people and human nature. ‘McGregor (1960) proposes that a manager’s view of the nature of human beings tends to fall into one of two sets. In the first set, which McGregor calls Theory X, managers assume

1. Employees inherently dislike work, and, whenever possible, will attempt to avoid it
2. Since employees dislike work, they must be coerced, controlled, or threatened with punishment to achieve goals
3. Employees will shirk responsibility and seek formal direction whenever possible
4. Most workers place security above all factors associated with work and will display little ambition

‘In contrast to these negative views about the nature of human beings, McGregor listed four other assumptions that constituted what he called Theory Y:

1. Employees can view work as natural as rest or play
2. People will exercise self-direction and self-control if they are committed to the objectives
3. The average person can learn to accept, and even seek, responsibility
4. The ability to make innovative decisions is widely dispersed throughout the population and is not necessarily the sole province of those in management positions’

Sourced from (Robbins, 1989, pp. 12-13, 24-25)
Johari Window Model

Luft’s Johari window divides up the personal information available in an interaction into four groups – ‘open’, ‘hidden’, ‘blind’ and ‘unknown’. It involves a simple visual that is used to convey the interrelated dynamic between disclosure and open knowledge, feedback and the potential for more self-knowledge. As a model it allows for fuzziness, where a number of interpersonal/behavioural elements are bundled, acknowledged and handled in consideration and discussion. It provides for an explanation of why each individual’s view of a situation is different, and must be, by definition, different, as well as indicating some of the nature and source of such difference.

Figure 2 Johari Window

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Known To Others</th>
<th>Known To Self</th>
<th>Not Known To Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open 1</td>
<td>Blind 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden 3</td>
<td>Unknown 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 Individual Perspectives in an Interpersonal Interaction

INTERACTION BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE

In an interaction, transactions that are open to one another are of material only in the open areas of the participants to the interaction. In a group context, this open area tends to be less than in the situation of a twosome.

Person A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Blind</th>
<th>1 Open</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Unknown</td>
<td>3 Hidden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Person B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Open</th>
<th>2 Blind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Hidden</td>
<td>4 Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DIRECTION OF EXCHANGE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE 3->1 is Disclosure

B can see A’s 1, and 2, B’s 1 and 3; and A can see B’s 1 and 2 and A’s 1 and 3. So each person’s perspective on/in an interaction is different.

When A tries to draw B’s attention to material in B’s 2, the result is usually rejection, since B is blind to the 2 area.

If material from the blind-2 area can be accepted as open, it can often add further material to the hidden-3 by illuminating the previously unknown-4 area. Moving material from the hidden-3 area to the open-1 area also allows for material from the unknown-4 area to be available to the observer as blind-3 material. It is the growth of openness that is needed for higher quality group interactions. There is an interactive system in interpersonal interactions: of disclosure, and of openness to additional self-awareness from feedback of others, that can increase self-awareness.
to lead to more disclosure and openness to more information on self, and especially of self as others see us.

Sourced from (Luft, 1984, pp.57-84)

Argyris and Schön Model I and Model II

Argyris and Schön (1974, 1978) propose that human beings hold theories of action that determine all deliberate behaviour. These theories are of two kinds: espoused theories that individuals can state explicitly, and theories-in-use that must be inferred from actual behaviour. While espoused theories vary widely, research suggests that virtually everyone acts consistently with the theory-in-use that Argyris and Schön call Model I (Argyris, 1982). Argyris and Schön have proposed an alternative theory-in-use, Model II, for creating learning systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL I</th>
<th>MODEL II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory-In-Use; inferred from actual behaviour</td>
<td>Alternative Theory-In-Use needed for creating a learning system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model I is a theory of unilateral control over others</td>
<td>Model II is a theory of joint control and inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action is designed to maintain four underlying values:</td>
<td>Its underlying values are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Achieving purposes as defined by the actor</td>
<td>• Valid information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Winning</td>
<td>• Free and informed choice, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suppressing negative feelings,</td>
<td>• Internal commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being rational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The primary strategies are those of:</td>
<td>The primary strategies are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unilateral advocacy</td>
<td>• To combine advocacy and inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Controlling inquiry, and</td>
<td>• To make reasoning explicit and confrontable, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protection of self and other</td>
<td>• To encourage others to do the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences include:</td>
<td>Consequences include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Defensive interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>• An increasing capacity not only for learning to improve strategies for achieving existing goals (single-loop learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Defensive group relationships</td>
<td>• But also for choosing among competing norms, goals and values (double-loop learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited learning, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decreased effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

De Bono’s 6 Hats

The concept of 6 hats allows for a variety of thinking foci:
- white hat for facts and figures;
- black hat for weaknesses, what is wrong with it;
- red hat for emotions and feelings;
- yellow hat for good points, speculative-positive;
- green hat for different (creative and lateral) thinking;
- blue hat for organising which hat thinking is to be used

In combination, and sequence, different hats can be used to explore a problem and progressively problem-solve. Developing first ideas involves the sequence blue-white-green; working with emotions involves the sequence red-white-green-blue; for developing usable alternatives the sequence is green-yellow-black. A more involved sequence for dealing with emotional situations might involve the sequence red-yellow-black-green-white-green-red-blue.

(DeBono, 1985, 1992)
Appendix 3.2.4A - Designed Session Schedule

Stage 1 – Explanatory and Exploratory Without Prejudice Discussions

Session 1:

Stage 1.1 – Introduction of Concept and Process

1. Introductions
   - Dianne Allen
   - Group participants

2. Explanation
   - Experimental testing
   - Concept & Issues – Reflective Research of Practice for Professional Development
   - Research Project Design
   - Researcher’s expectations

3. Discussion Arising
   - Questions
   - Sharing contributions
   - Exploring participants expectations

4. Wrap Up and foreshadowing Session 2
   - Without Prejudice now and next step
   - Consent form
   - Factors benchmarking survey tool
   - Reflections forms
   - Logistics next session –
     - Availability email: dlallen@ozemail.com.au
     - Availability for one-on-one discussions for reflection etc
     - Additional papers if interested

Sessions 2-10: preparations for Reflective Research of Practice

Stage 1.2 – Self- and Other- awareness

5. Exploratory
   - Participant’s introductories
   - Name
   - Background: work; previous studies/ roles/ disciplines
   - Any specific identified practice concerns at this stage – experience/ focus

6. Exploratory
   - Diagnostics
     - Personality – Myers Briggs Type Indicator
     - Individual/ Team orientation
     - Tolerance of Ambiguity (Whetten & Cameron) – Reflective Research aspect
     - Locus of Control ( Whetten & Cameron) – Stress aspect
     - Cognitive Style – Thinking, learning style aspect
     - Professional Practice focus Diagnostics
     - Human Values (Robbins) – Theory–in-use aspect

Stage 1.3 Elements of Reflective Research of Practice

7. Reflective Research of Practice elements:
   - Data Collection Issues & Focus for data collection

8. Data Collection practice & Theory-in-use exploration practice

9. Stage 1 Wrap-Up
   - Factors status review
   - Decision time for commitment to Stage 2
   - Logistics for Stage 2
Stage 2– Own Practice Exploration & Peer Group Discussions
10. Stage 2 Own Practice Deliberations
   • Data collection
   • Data analysis
   • Theory exploration
   • Alternative actions design
11. Stage 2 Wrap-Up
   • Factors status review
   • Decision time for commitment to Stage 3
   • Logistics for Stage 3

Stage 3– Own Practice Experimentation and reporting back for Peer Review Discussions – Action Learning
12. Stage 3 Own Practice Experimentation
   • Data collection
   • Data analysis
   • Theory exploration
   • Alternative actions design
13. Stage 3 Wrap-Up
   • Factors status review
   • Decision time for commitment to Stage 4
   • Logistics for Stage 4

Stage 4 – Peer Group Continuations on Own with Access to Researcher (if and when required)

Alternative Route: ( Introduced for CNHS process)

Instead of my input up front, you might use this opportunity to explore a professional concern of yours. My role would be as an outsider, to be the naïve novice, to your discipline and its practice. Then as I engage, I may have some input to contribute, in the area of self-awareness, of group processes, of reflective practice, of critical thinking to help us all engage in the enhanced exploration of the professional concern …

So it would focus fairly quickly on practice concerns for you. It would be more fluid than the above structure.

The literature on action learning etc, indicates at least one day, up front, where the facilitator is ‘making all the shots’ – input to prepare for action learning. From my reading this does not involve some of the depth of the ‘careful’ work on self-awareness. This is what I think is different about my approach, (and comes from my Dispute Resolution studies) and in my view pays off later.
Appendix 3.2.4B - Overview Enunciated in Ethics Committee Submission

1. **Descriptive Title of Project:** DEVELOPING AN ACTION LEARNING PEER SUPPORT GROUP OF PROFESSIONALS TO INVESTIGATE WAYS OF IMPROVING THEIR OWN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

2. **7 line summary of project aims:**

To help a small group of professionals (TAFE teachers of Adult Basic Education*), with different disciplinary backgrounds, within an organisation, to form as a peer support team to make a systematic study of their ways of dealing with interpersonal interactions where current outcomes do not entirely meet their expectations, and then to try to design changes of approach to try in similar situations and to evaluate the results of the trial.

8. **Please provide a detailed explanation, in LAY TERMS of the methodology and procedures of this research:**

The methodology for the research will involve an action research of the effectiveness of the tools and processes adopted to accomplish the objective.

The objective is to form a peer support group which is able to
- conduct discussion of their own practice in an effective, reflective way;
- make a systematic study of common problems to look for explanatory patterns;
- consider alternative designs of approaching the same sort of situation when it next occurs;
- and then committing to try that alternative approach and report back to the peer group the results, for further exploration and consideration.

The procedures used will include
- use of diagnostic tools to explore the individual behavioural tendencies that are operating in their current responses to situations;
- focusing on instances of practice, especially in interpersonal exchanges which generate unexpected outcomes and gathering specific data about the instances, especially the thinking instructing the participant’s action/s
- undertaking structured group discussion of the instance, the issue/s involved, the action undertaken, alternative options for action in similar instances, and the theoretical understanding that is instructing those action decisions
- encouraging the participants to an alternative response approach which is consistent with their own explicated values and style, to try the next time a similar instance arises, and to report back the results of that trial for further exploration

The internal method of evaluation will be by self-assessment of the participants, using the diagnostic tools as the base benchmark, and any other peer group generated evaluation

The external method of evaluation will be based on the continuance of the participants through the whole process, and the incorporation of this approach in to their ongoing practice beyond the research period. (This is set on the basis that busy professionals do not continue with something unless they really value its contribution to their daily needs.)
16. Confidentiality:
What measures will be taken to protect the privacy of individual subjects in terms of the test results and other confidential data obtained?

The research is to assess the effectiveness of the process and tools used. The reporting of that research will not require the use of any personally identifying material, or any confidential, corporate material. Appropriate acknowledgement of the support from those involved would be given, or omitted if requested.

The effectiveness of the peer support group lies in its respect for the confidential nature of the discussions, and the mutual trust that develops as a result. It would be up to the peer team to decide if their findings merit more broadly based corporate communication and how they go about doing that.

17. Will information collected from data or interview be published?

NO, Apart from that necessary to report on the research and findings in the required thesis form. Individual data will be either aggregated or be provided in a way that ensures anonymity.

18. Will any part of the experimental procedures described herein be placed on an audio tape, film strip, movie film or video-tape, (excluding still photographs)?

Not without permission. Some participants may prefer to undertake their reflection by structured/unstructured conversation with the researcher. In these cases, audio tape will be used for data captured, and retained as long as necessary for research purposes (validation) only.

19. How will the data (including tapes, transcripts and specimens) be stored?

Structured reports from participants will be collected and filed. Any storage of data including audio tapes will be by the researcher in consultation with the university.

20. Does the project involve the use of drugs?

NO

21. Does the project involve the use of invasive procedures (e.g. blood sampling) or the possibility of physical or mental stress?

Invasive procedures: NO

Possibility of mental stress: That which might be considered to be an ordinary part of living, stress relating to self-awareness and/or challenge of frames of understanding, value systems. The concept of the peer group is that of support. The responsibility of the researcher-participant is one of professional care appropriate to level of expertise – facilitation of a structured intervention amongst volunteers, with the opportunity to withdraw without penalty at key “commitment” points.

22. Does this project involve obtaining information (e.g. data) of a private nature from any Commonwealth/State/Local Government Department or any other Agency?

YES, it may, but the information should be able to be rendered anonymously
Appendix 3.4.1.1 - Evaluation Design Argument

Toulmin’s Diagram is used to enunciate the argument analysing the action and its possible evaluation (Dunn, 1982). The argument is a syllogism. A syllogism is a structure of an argument assumed to be rational/ reasonable. It cannot be proved.

USE OF TOULMIN’S TRANSACTIONAL MODEL TO ANALYSE PROPOSED ACTION RESEARCH

CLAIM: Performance is better (who for?: professional?, client?)
Intervention was worthwhile
(How define “good”, “better”, “best”)

QUALIFIER: Extent to which outcomes support claim/s

ALTERNATIVE TRAINING OPTIONS
OTHER THEORY OPTIONS

THEREFORE

DATA: GROUNDS:
- Behaviour before and after
- Thinking before and after
- Decision-making before and after
- Interpersonal dynamics before and after
- Commitment to an explicit position before and after

SINCE: WARRANT:
1. Input meant more explicit activity/ more conscious activity
2. Input meant more conscious /understood decision-making
3. Decision-making is able to be explained (?trivialised !! pejorative sense)

BECAUSE: BACKING:
1. More explicit behaviour may be able to more ethical in that it may be open to others to review – accountability
2. The basis of my valuing it:
   - it jells with my experience
   - it jells with the enunciated experience/ thinking of others - Kramer, Frey, Kressel, (now Patton, Ravetz); ADR student critique; ADR student questionnaire (use of case material, exploration of own practice, interaction of theory and practice ..)
   - for management: there is some support of it in the management literature

UNLESS: REBUTTAL:
1. Hawthorne effect
2. If it doesn’t work, where is the inadequacy?:
   - inadequacy options:
     - theoretical base
     - practitioner (trainer/ input facilitator) skills
     - student (manager/ professional) skills/ preparation/ selection - back to Kressel's characteristics, Alison's training outcomes || traits issues; for managers' skills see Whetten & Cameron; for ADR see Linda Fisher
     - input (course) structure
     - input (course) content
     - some other unprojected source of error
3. culture congruence/ incongruence (Argyris’ point about socialisation and Model I organisational culture not rewarding change)
4. stakeholders’ commitment
5. structural (systemic) (eg not enough time to observe change; to work at the necessary reinforcement of less effective ways until facility)
Appendix 3.4.1.2 - Benchmark Questionnaire

TOOL DESIGNED TO EVALUATE HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE PROCESS BEING RESEARCHED – DRAFT 2 –1/11/99

One of the steps in research is gathering data.

For this research project I need information about a number of factors which are either involved in the process, and/or designed to contribute to

- the development of a peer support group which is then able to engage in action learning about
- ways of improving their own professional practice.

The following items, and scales, have been designed to provide some mechanism to evaluate the impact of the process being researched.

To try and evaluate impact, in as objective a way as possible, some “before” (benchmark), “during” and “after” information is required.

One of the principles involved in the process I am researching is self-awareness, another is self-assessment. So, where you see yourself as being ON THIS SCALE, IS where you see yourself – and that is the information I need.

As we progress through the project there will be a number of tools used. You will keep a copy of all the “documents” I need to collect for data. (So that you too can track and evaluate change, for yourself.)

This tool has been designed to “measure” or “calibrate” your self-assessment of where you understand yourself to be on a scale, for the various elements of the process being researched.

In Part B, the purpose of asking you to also rank HOW YOU SEE that position, in comparison with others, helps to give the scale some “external” basis of measurement.

In this part of the research I am also trialing this tool. If you do not understand it in any way, and/or think it could be improved in any way, I would appreciate feedback on that.
PART A:

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS TO YOU.

The process to be undertaken in this research will explore your openness to change at a number of levels. This first part seeks to identify, for you, what relative value you place on each of these factors.

For the following list of factors can you rank them from 1-10 based on their relative importance to you.

(The order of these items is the order in which it is designed that they will be addressed during the research project.)

Which of these is most important to you, and where you would like this research project to give you something towards its development?

☐ Self-Awareness – what makes you tick, what are some of the reasons you do what you do
☐ Awareness of others – what makes them tick, what are some of the reasons they do what they do (behave in that way)
☐ How to go about finding out how and what you do affects another person’s response, why doing the same thing with another person does not always result in the same response
☐ How to go about becoming clearer about how you have been thinking when interacting with other people
☐ How to explore what is your reasoning which has led to the decision you have made to act in a certain way, rather than in another way, a way which you could have chosen to act
☐ Your sense of satisfaction with how you are interacting with others
☐ Your sense of satisfaction with how others are responding to you
☐ How you can identify the values you use when deciding between two or more options of how to act (how you decide the difference between right and wrong)
☐ Your understanding of how important those values are to you – you will stick to them even though they do not always lead to the most comfortable or satisfying consequences for you
☐ Your ability to explain those values to another if asked

In ranking these items is there a particular emphasis you would like on one or more rather than others?

________________________
**PART B:**

This part endeavours to give you some way of setting where you think you are on each of these elements at this time (calibrating and benchmarking)

1. **I consider my level of self-awareness:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very aware</th>
<th>aware</th>
<th>unaware</th>
<th>Very unaware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

   Where I think I rate:

   

   By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:

   (how aware I think they are of themselves)

   

   By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:

   

   By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:

   

2. **I consider my level of other-person awareness:**

   (Awareness of others – what makes them tick, what are some of the reasons they do what they do (behave in that way))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very aware</th>
<th>aware</th>
<th>unaware</th>
<th>Very unaware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

   Where I think I rate:

   

   By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:

   (how aware I think they are of others)

   By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:

   By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:

3. **I consider my level of awareness of my thinking about a problem:**

   *In relation to a problem you are currently dealing with, or have dealt with recently:*

   *My sense of how I am going about a problem*

   I feel I understand the problem  I do not feel that I understand the problem completely

   Where I think I rate:

   

   By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:

   (how they appear to understand the problems they need to deal with)

   By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:
By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:

**My thinking about it and ability to explain that:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can explain why I am doing it that way</th>
<th>I can’t explain why I am doing it that way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where I think I rate:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:
(how they explain why they are doing it that way)

By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:
By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:

4. **I consider the decisions I make to act**

*In relation to a recent decision you made to do something:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can explain my reasons for the decision I made</th>
<th>I can’t easily explain my reasons for the decision I made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where I think I rate:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:
(how much they are able to demonstrate that they have reasons which they can explain)

By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:
By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:

5. **So far as my interpersonal relations with others go:**

*My satisfaction with my approach:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am satisfied with how I go about all of them</th>
<th>I am not satisfied with how I go about any of them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where I think I rate:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:
(how much they indicate they are satisfied with their approach)

By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:
By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:
Contributing to Learning to Change

**My level of satisfaction the response of others to my approach:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am satisfied with the responses of others to me</th>
<th>I am not satisfied with the responses of others to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where I think I rate:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:

(how much they indicate they are satisfied with the responses they get from others in interpersonal interactions)

By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:

By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:

6. **I consider that I am committed to a set of values that I can explain:**

**Commitment**

(Your understanding of how important those values are to you – you will stick to them even though they do not always lead to the most comfortable or satisfying consequences for you)

Very committed    Very uncommitted

Where I think I rate:

| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |

By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:

(how firmly they stick to the values that they consider are important to them)

By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:

By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:

**Explain**

Able to Explain clearly    Unable to Explain clearly

Where I think I rate:

| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |

By comparison, this is where I think most of my acquaintances rate:

(how much they are able to explain what their values are, and how much they are committed to them)

By comparison, this is where I think my partner/ the friend that I know best, would rate:

By comparison, this is where I think my supervisor (in the workplace) would rate:
PART C:

SESSION REFLECTION:

For my own action research, I need to know which part of the session fell into one or other of the categories: enjoyable, useful, in your opinion needs changing.

If you cannot identify a part of the session which fits the relevant category, then, for the evaluation being explored (enjoyable, useful, needs to be changed, etc) use the option of “whole” or “none”. (For example: none was enjoyable, but the whole was useful, or vice versa: the whole was enjoyable but none of it was useful).

If you wish to elaborate, and explain why this was so, for you, that is optional, and will be appreciated.

I will be endeavouring to use this feedback to instruct my approach to the development of this process, and especially how I might modify what I am doing to improve it.

Session Date: _______________

The part/s of this session that I enjoyed:
*  
*  
*  
*  

The part/s of this session that I considered useful:
*  
*  
*  
*  

The one thing I would change about this session was:

Any other comment about the session you would like to make:
___________________________________________________________________________
Appendix 3.4.1.3 - Progress Questionnaire

STAGE 1 EVALUATION REVIEW – DECEMBER 1999

PART A:

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS TO YOU.

HAS THERE BEEN ANY CHANGE IN THIS SECTION FOR YOU? – IF SO INDICATE WHAT YOUR CURRENT POSITION IS:

The process to be undertaken in this research will explore your openness to change at a number of levels. This first part seeks to identify, for you, what relative value you place on each of these factors.

For the following list of factors can you rank them from 1-10 based on their relative importance to you.

(The order of these items is the order in which it is designed that they will be addressed during the research project.)

Which of these is most important to you, and where you would like this research project to give you something towards its development?

- Self-Awareness – what makes you tick, what are some of the reasons you do what you do
- Awareness of others – what makes them tick, what are some of the reasons they do what they do (behave in that way)
- How to go about finding out how and what you do affects another person’s response, why doing the same thing with another person does not always result in the same response
- How to go about becoming clearer about how you have been thinking when interacting with other people
- How to explore what is your reasoning which has led to the decision you have made to act in a certain way, rather than in another way, a way which you could have chosen to act
- Your sense of satisfaction with how you are interacting with others
- Your sense of satisfaction with how others are responding to you
- How you can identify the values you use when deciding between two or more options of how to act (how you decide the difference between right and wrong)
- Your understanding of how important those values are to you – you will stick to them even though they do not always lead to the most comfortable or satisfying consequences for you
- Your ability to explain those values to another if asked

In ranking these items is there a particular emphasis you would like on one or more rather than others?
**STAGE 1 EVALUATION REVIEW – DECEMBER 1999**

**PART B:**

**NOTE:** *This time I am asking you about your sense of change in yourself. The “before” rating does not need to match your original rating in the benchmark questionnaire.*

This part endeavours to give you some way of setting where you think you are on each of these elements at this time (calibrating and benchmarking)

1. **I consider my level of self-awareness:**
   
   Where I think I rate: **Before Stage 1:**
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   By comparison, this is where I think I rate **After Stage 1:**
   
   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

2. **I consider my level of other-person awareness:**

   (Awareness of others – what makes them tick, what are some of the reasons they do what they do (behave in that way))

   Where I think I rate: **Before Stage 1:**
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   By comparison, this is where I think I rate **After Stage 1:**
   
   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

3. **I consider my level of awareness of my thinking about a problem:**

   *In relation to a problem you are currently dealing with, or have dealt with recently:*

   **My sense of how I am going about a problem**
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel I understand the problem</th>
<th>I do not feel that I understand the problem completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   By comparison, this is where I think I rate **After Stage 1:**
   
   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

   **My thinking about it and ability to explain that:**
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can explain why I am doing it that way</th>
<th>I can’t explain why I am doing it that way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   By comparison, this is where I think I rate **After Stage 1:**
   
   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
4. I consider the decisions I make to act

In relation to a recent decision you made to do something

I can explain my reasons for the decision I made  I can’t easily explain my reasons for the decision I made

Where I think I rate: Before Stage 1:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

By comparison, this is where I think I rate After Stage 1:

|

5. So far as my interpersonal relations with others go:

My satisfaction with my approach:

I am satisfied with how I go about all of them  I am not satisfied with how I go about any of them

Where I think I rate: Before Stage 1:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

By comparison, this is where I think I rate After Stage 1:

|

My level of satisfaction the response of others to my approach:

I am satisfied with the responses of others to me  I am not satisfied with the responses of others to me

Where I think I rate: Before Stage 1:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

By comparison, this is where I think I rate After Stage 1:

|

6. I consider that I am committed to a set of values that I can explain:

Commitment

(Your understanding of how important those values are to you – you will stick to them even though they do not always lead to the most comfortable or satisfying consequences for you)

Where I think I rate: Before Stage 1:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

By comparison, this is where I think I rate After Stage 1:

|
**Explain**

Able to Explain clearly  Unable to Explain clearly

Where I think I rate:  **Before Stage 1:**

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9

By comparison, this is where I think I rate  **After Stage 1:**

---

**STAGE 1 EVALUATION REVIEW – DECEMBER 1999**

**PART C:**

**STAGE REFLECTION:**

For my own action research, I need to know which part of the stage fell into one or other of the categories: enjoyable, useful, in your opinion needs changing.

If you cannot identify a part of the session which fits the relevant category, then, for the evaluation being explored (enjoyable, useful, needs to be changed, etc) use the option of "whole" or "none". (For example: none was enjoyable, but the whole was useful, or vice versa: the whole was enjoyable but none of it was useful).

If you wish to elaborate, and explain why this was so, for you, that is optional, and will be appreciated.

I will be endeavouring to use this feedback to instruct my approach to the development of this process, and especially how I might modify what I am doing to improve it.

Stage 1: ______________

The part/s of this stage that I enjoyed:

* *

Can you identify which part was most enjoyable for you:

Can you identify which part was least enjoyable for you:

The part/s of this stage that I considered useful:

* *

Can you identify which part was most useful for you:

Can you identify which part was least useful for you:

The things I would change about this stage were:

Any other comment about Stage 1 you would like to make: PTO as necessary:
Appendix 8.6 – Other Literature on Incongruence In-Practice

Schön speaks of a ‘Hall of Mirrors’ (Schön, 1991, pp.355-6)

In a collaborative self-study, a Hall of Mirrors unfolds. The researcher wants to conduct with her partner a collaborative inquiry into the ways of thinking, knowing, and understanding implicit in their patterns of action. She intends, at least in part, to help them learn to conduct this sort of inquiry for themselves; she must therefore be able to live out with them what she wants them to learn to do. So she is personally on the line in a special way.

Collaborative self-study demands what community psychiatrist Leonard Duhl has called an “existential use of the self.” Abandoning the expert role of spectator/manipulator, the research presents himself to his subjects as a person who seeks to enter into their experience of practice. He says to them, in effect, “I join you, I try to put myself in your shoes, I try to experience what you are experiencing.” As Bar-On pointed out in our discussions, this takes time. Many of our cases are the products of researchers who have been willing to stay with social situations long enough, delving into them deeply enough, to get just such a feeling for their subjects’ experience. But the researcher asks his subjects to make themselves vulnerable to him, so he must make himself vulnerable to them. He tries to remain fully present as a person. As Emerson once spoke of farmers as “men farming,” so the researcher sees himself as a person inquiring.

At the same time, the research must recognize that there are limits to reciprocal empathy and vulnerability, limits rooted in a legitimate demand for a certain kind of objectivity and consistency. ... What is demanded of him, in addition, is that he filter these materials through his own critical intelligence, making use of understandings that may go beyond those entertained by his subjects at any particular moment.

The researcher must try to make her own understandings problematic to herself, subjecting them to the test of her collaborators‘ backtalk, which on the one hand, she must also challenge. ... The reflective turn calls for a paradoxical stance toward many things, and especially toward the whole question of objectivity. The researcher must recognize, as Mattingly pointed out, that there is no given, preobjectified state of affairs waiting to be uncovered through inquiry. All research findings are someone’s constructions of reality. And yet the researcher must strive to test her constructions in the situation by bringing to the surface, juxtaposing, and discriminating among alternate accounts of that reality. If there is a problem with the objectivist stance, it does not lie in the striving for objectivity but rather, as Dan Bar-On observed, in the belief that it is possible to establish the validity of a claim to objective truth with finality.

And earlier, Schön described it (Schön, 1987, p.220)

'psychoanalysis is of special interest because it shares with certain other practices - teaching, management and social work, for example - a powerful interpersonal component. Because an analyst's practice consists of interactions with other persons, a psychoanalytic practicum parallels its practice. It is unavoidably a hall of mirrors in which students read messages about psychoanalytic practice in a supervisor's behavior - whether or not he intends to convey them - and supervisors read in their students' behavior messages about the students' way of doing therapy. The effectiveness of psychoanalytic supervision depends significantly on the degree to which coach and student recognize and exploit such mirrorings so as to make their practicum a reflective one in this additional sense.'

p.289 [there are] 'several themes relevant to developing the general idea of a reflective practicum version of the paradox and predicament inherent in learning a designlike practice appear in the theory-in-action seminars and give rise there to a failure cycle that may be characteristic of an important class of practicums

13 Note: Schön deals with writing about a third person in a gender neutral way by alternating between the feminine and the masculine third person pronoun – a device that I personally found irritating. I noticed it, and I noticed how I was reacting to the different flavour of text and the way my perception of the textual content changed, depending on which of the terms were in use. It seemed to me that when ‘she’ was used, negative connotations arose, beyond what was in the text.
in our response to the failure cycle, Argyris and I treated our coaching as material for
reflective experimentation and tried to involve our students as co-experimenters - creating a
variant of the hall of mirrors that opens up possibilities for use in other coaching situations
at different stages of the several seminars, we became aware of a variety of blocks to
learning and devised experiments to deal with them. Both the blocks and the experiments
may be pertinent to other practicums
the three models of coaching [joint experimentation, "Follow me!", and the hall of mirrors]
are all present in the theory-in-action seminars. Their suitability to different learning
contexts can now be explored
Model II was the principal subject of the theory-in-action seminars, but its utility to the
communicative work of any reflective practicum can now be examined

p.294 Our Version of the Hall of Mirrors we [coaches] became aware of our own predicament
as a version of theirs [students] .. we tried to involve [the students] with us in joint reflection on
the learning/ coaching enterprise. We knew that in certain crucial aspects we knew more than
they; but we also knew the limits of our ability to describe our practice and keenly felt our
uncertainties about coaching

p.294 'the paradox of our aspiration [of having the students as co-researchers] was that it
depended on meanings and skills the students had not yet acquired. Nevertheless, we noticed
that some of our students were manifestly more successful than others in joining our reflective
experimentation. .. [the successful] students seemed to be distinguished by three qualities .. [1]
highly rational .. [1.1] in their ability to recognize logical inconsistencies when these were
pointed out .. [1.2] their abhorrence of inconsistency and incongruity .. [1.3] their readiness to
test their assumptions by appeal to directly observable data. .. [2] highly reflective [2.1]
evidenced by their readiness to analyze their errors .. [2.2] try out thought experiments .. [2.3]
and critically examine their own reasoning. .. [3] they were inclined toward cognitive risktaking:
more challenged than dismayed by the prospect of learning something radically new, more ready
to see their errors as puzzles to be solved than as sources of discouragement

Or as Lee Andresen has expressed it, noting that his use is different from Schön’s but used as a metaphor
in a way that Schön might recognize and understand (Andresen, 1993 88, pp.5-70):
In my frequent consulting with academics who complain of difficulty ‘getting through’ to
students, I have wondered whether their problem may have its roots in a kind of forgetting. One
plausible interpretation of this failure as teacher may be that one forgets what it was like to be
ignorant and one is now unwilling – unable? – to revisit the experience of not knowing those
things at which one is now expert.
… I call an event a ‘mirror’ to declare that a subject can recognize within it an image of some
other event(s). Experiences that, phenomenologically, ‘mirror’ one another are connected in a
particular way. … In a ‘hall of mirrors’, we observe images of, and connections between
multiple events.

Lynn Fendler, in working with concepts of reflection, uses irony/ironic as a way of describing the
mismatch between claim and outcomes, as follows (Fendler, 2003):
The research leading to the ALACT model and the research deriving from it construe reflection
as a step-by-step process. Reflective thinking then becomes formalized in instrumental terms.
Some, following Dewey, might say this is ironic because reflection was meant as an alternative
to instrumental ways of thinking.

Richert’s explication appeals—perhaps ironically—to Dewey’s terms to justify introspective sources
of knowledge. Her version of feminist reflection seems to imply that expert knowledge has been
socialized by masculinist agendas including technical rationality (or “phallogocentrism,” see, e.g., Grosz, 1989), but that one’s "own intelligence" and "center of knowing" are sources of
empowerment. In this approach, reflection is constructed as a way of getting in touch with one’s
authentic inner self in order to think in ways that have not been influenced by the same
theoretical tools that built the master’s house.
In the case of teacher education, the laborious attempts to facilitate reflective practices for teachers fly in the face of the truism expressed in the epigraph of this article, namely, that there is no such thing as an unreflective teacher. If educational researchers believe that all teachers think about what they do, then why is there so much talk about making teachers into reflective practitioners? Zeichner further writes, "an illusion of teacher development has often been created that has maintained in more subtle ways the subservient position of the teacher" (1996a, p. 201). Zeichner's critique of the subservience of the teacher is based primarily on the observation that expert researchers rarely listen to teachers when they develop policy and teaching guidelines. My critique extended Zeichner's onto epistemological and political grounds by arguing that an array of historical influences has contributed to complex meanings for reflection, and that common practices of reflection (journal writing and autobiographical narratives) may have unintended and undesirable political effects. When teacher education research provides elaborate programs for teaching teachers to be reflective practitioners, the implicit assumption is that teachers are not reflective unless they practice the specific techniques promoted by researchers. It is ironic that the rhetoric about reflective practitioners focuses on empowering teachers, but the requirements of learning to be reflective are based on the assumption that teachers are incapable of reflection without direction from expert authorities.

Jack Whitehead speaks of living contradictions (Whitehead, 2003)

Through my presentation of evidence from the internet I now want to share the global educational significance of the self-studies of practitioner-researchers, particularly those associated with OERC and the University of Bath. I am thinking of this significance in terms of a commitment to research the implications of experiencing ourselves as living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989) as we recognise that we are not living our values as fully as we could in our professional lives as educators and educational researchers.

...In the development of a curriculum of the healing nurse and of an action research approach to the professional development of nurses within a Japanese University I could see Je Kan might benefit from Bernstein's insights into the issues of power and control related to the recontextualisation of knowledge from his embodied knowledge as a healing nurse in the UK into the curriculum of a healing nurse in a Japanese University.

However, the video shows that in my enthusiasm to communicate my own insights about the value of Bernstein's ideas I had lost sight of a lesson I thought I had learnt well from the ideas of Martin Buber (1985) concerning the special humility of the educator.

In my enthusiasm and passion I was imposing my ideas onto Je Kan in a way that was serving the colonising interest of replacing his own meanings with my own. Yet again I experienced myself a living contradiction! This video serves as a reminder for me to hold on to Buber's insight that the special humility of the educator should prevent the imposition of the hierarchical view of the world of the educator onto the student. The educator's gaze should always be mediated by a sustained connection with the particular being and needs of the student. In my passion and enthusiasm I had permitted the connection to be severed. Part of my delight in viewing the video is in the recognition of how much of value I have learnt from the experience of viewing it. The embarrassment associated with failure is present but the delight in seeing ways of improving what I was doing is stronger. It is in the delight that I feel the hope of learning from error and mistake. While we do make mistakes in our professional lives as educators there is much hope in our learning from these mistakes and sharing this learning with others.

And in his earlier article (Whitehead, 1989) My insights about the nature of educational theory have been influenced by viewing video-tapes of my classroom practice. I could see that the 'I' in the question 'How do I improve this process of education here?', existed as a living contradiction. By this I mean that 'I' contained two mutually exclusive opposites, the experience of holding educational values and the experience of their negation.

...The reason that values are fundamental to educational theory is that education is a value-laden practical activity. We cannot distinguish a process as education without making a value-judgement. I am taking such values to be the human goals which we use to give our lives their particular form. These values, which are embodied in our practice, are often referred to in terms
Contributing to Learning to Change

such as freedom, justice, democracy, (Peters 1966) and love and productive work (Fromm 1960). When offering an explanation for an individual's educational development these values can be used as reasons for action. For example, if a person is experiencing the negation of freedom, yet believes that she should be free, then the reason why she is acting to become free can be given in terms of freedom, i.e., I am acting in this way because I value my freedom. If someone asks why you are working to overcome anti-democratic forces in the work place then I believe that a commitment to the value of democracy would count as a reason to explain your actions. I do not believe that values are the type of qualities whose meanings can be communicated solely through a propositional form. I think values are embodied in our practice and their meaning can be communicated in the course of their emergence in practice. To understand the values, which move our educational development forward, I think we should start with records of our experience of their negation (Larter 1985,1987). I want to stress the importance of the visual records of our practice. In using such records we can both experience ourselves as living contradictions and communicate our understanding of the value-laden practical activity of education.

Through the use of video-tape the teachers can engage in dialogues with colleagues about their practice. They can show the places where their values are negated.

I am also drawing on the following, representative of Bateson’s work (Bateson, 1972):


Russell's Theory of Logical Types applied to the concept of "learning"
Learning is a communicational phenomenon, ..cybernetic revolution in thought .. [explains it]

The Theory of Logical Types
The "Learning" of Computers, Rats, and Men
Learning I
Learning II
Learning III
The Role of Genetics in Psychology
A Note on Hierarchies

Theory of Logical Types: (p.280)
• no class can, in formal logical or mathematical discourse be a member of itself;
• that a class of classes cannot be one of the classes which are its members;
• that a name is not the thing named;
• that "John Bateson" is the class of which that boy is the unique member; and so forth.
• That a class cannot be one of those items which are correctly classified as its nonmembers
If these simple rules of formal discourse are contravened, paradox will be generated and the discourse vitiated

p.283 …"learning" undoubtedly denotes change of some kind. To say what kind of change is a delicate matter. [If] change [we] will have to make the same sort of allowance for the varieties of logical type which has been routine in physical sciences since the days of Newton. The simplest and most familiar form of change is motion .. "position or zero motion", "constant velocity", "acceleration", "rate of change of acceleration" and so on.
Change denotes process. But processes are themselves subject to "change".

pp.283-287, 293
Zero Learning (specificity of response which right or wrong is not subject to correction) the case in which an entity shows minimal change in its response to a repeated item of sensory impact
• In experimental settings when 'learning' is complete and the animal gives approximately 100% correct responses to the repeated stimulus
• In cases of habituation, where the animal has ceased to give overt response to what was formerly a disturbing stimulus
• In cases where the pattern of response is minimally determined by experience and maximally determined by genetic factors
Contributing to Learning to Change

- In cases where the response is now highly stereotyped
- In simple electronic circuits, where the circuit structure is not itself subject to change resulting from the passage of impulses within the circuit - i.e. where the causal links between 'stimulus' and 'response' are as the engineers say 'soldered in'.

Learning incapable of using error as information

pp.287-292, 293
Learning I (is change in specificity of response by correction of errors of choice within a set of alternatives) are the cases in which an entity gives at Time 2 a different response from what it gave at Time 1
- Phenomenon of habituation - the change from responding to each occurrence of a repeated event to not overtly responding; and extinction or loss of habituation
- Classical Pavlovian conditioning
- Learning that occurs in the contexts of instrumental reward and instrumental avoidance
- Phenomenon of rote learning
- The disruption, extinction, or inhibition of 'completed' learning which may follow change or absence of reinforcement

In this kind of learning there is an assumption about the 'context'.
Stimulus is an elementary signal, internal or external
Context of stimulus is a metamessage which classifies the elementary signal
Context of context of stimulus is a meta-metamessage which classified the metamessage and so on.
'context' is a collective term for all those events which tell the organism among what set of alternatives he must make his next choice

pp.293-301
Learning II (deutero-learning, set learning, learning to learn, transfer of learning) (is change in the process of Learning I) a corrective change in the set of alternatives from which choice is made, or it is change in how the sequence of experience is punctuated
- Human rote learning learning to rote learn (Hull)
- Set learning (Harlow)
- Reversal learning (Bitterman)
- Experimental neurosis

pp.297-301 Learning II emerges in human affairs in interaction
- Character - a person's typical response
- The punctuation of human interaction
- Phenomenon of 'transference' in psychotherapy

What is learned in Learning II is a way of punctuating events
Contradictions at Level II are "double binds"

pp.293, 301-306
Learning III is change in the process of Learning II, e.g. a corrective change in the system of sets of alternatives from which choice is made (to demand this level of performance of some men and some mammals is sometimes pathogenic)
Learning III throws these unexamined premises open to question and change
Changes that might constitute Learning III:
- The individual might learn to form more readily those habits the forming of which we call Learning II
- He might learn to close for himself the "loopholes" which would allow him to avoid Learning III
- He might learn to change the habits acquired by Learning II
- He might learn he is a creature which can and does unconsciously achieve Learning II
- He might learn to limit or direct his Learning II
- If Learning II is a learning of the contexts of Learning I, then Learning III should be a learning of the contexts of those contexts

But the above list proposes a paradox. Learning III (i.e. learning about Learning II) may lead either to an increase in Learning II or to a limitation and perhaps a reduction of that phenomenon. Certainly it must lead to a greater flexibility in the premises acquired by the process of Learning II - a freedom from their bondage.
Learning IV would be change in Learning III, but probably does not occur in any adult living organism on this earth. Evolutionary process has, however, created organisms whose ontogeny brings them to Level III. The combination of phylogenesis with ontogenesis, in fact achieves Level IV (ontogeny - development of an individual organism; phylogenesis - the development or evolution of a kind or type of animal or plant; phylum = more general group of individual organisms - humankind is species sapiens of the genus homo, of the order primate, of subclass eutheria, of the class mammal, subphylum vertebrate, of the phylum chordate of the kingdom animal).

In the strange world outside the psychological laboratory, phenomena which belong to the category Learning II are a major preoccupation of anthropologists, educators, psychiatrists, animal trainers, human parents and children.

I have again and again taken a stance to the side of my ladder of logical types to discuss the structure of this ladder. The essay is therefore itself an example of the fact that the ladder is not unbranching.

**BATESON ON HABIT: ECONOMY OF THOUGHT: PARTICULARITIES & GENERALITIES ISSUE**


Introduction; Style and Meaning; Levels and Logical Types; Primary Process; Quantitative Limits of Consciousness; Qualitative Limits of Consciousness; The Corrective Nature of Art; Analysis of Balinese Painting; Composition

I shall argue that the problem of grace is fundamentally a problem of integration and that what is to be integrated is the diverse parts of the mind – especially those multiple levels of which one extreme is called ‘consciousness’ and the other the ‘unconscious’. For the attainment of grace, the reasons of the heart must be integrated with the reasons of the reason.

Samuel Butler’s insistence that the better an organism “knows” something the less conscious it becomes of its knowledge, i.e. there is a process whereby knowledge (or “habit” – whether of action, perception or thought) sinks to deeper and deeper levels of the mind. This phenomenon which is central to Zen discipline, is also relevant to all art and all skill.

Consciousness, for obvious mechanical reasons, must always be limited to a rather small fraction of mental process.

The unconsciousness associated with habit is an economy both of thought and of consciousness; and the same is true of the inaccessibility of the processes of perception.

In truth, our life is such that its unconscious components are continuously present in all their multiple forms. It follows that in our relationships we continuously exchange messages about these unconscious materials, and it becomes important also to exchange metamessages by which we tell each other what order and species of unconsciousness (or consciousness) attaches to our messages. In a merely pragmatic way, this is important because the orders of truth are different for different sort of messages. Insofar as a message is conscious and voluntary, it could be deceitful. I can tell you that the cat is on the mat when in fact she is not there. I can tell you “I love you” when in fact I do not. But discourse about relationship is commonly accompanied by a mass of semivoluntary kinesic and autonomic signals which provide a more trustworthy comment on the verbal message.

Similarly, with skill, the fact of skill indicates the presence of large unconscious components in the performance.
p.138 The artist's dilemma is of a peculiar sort. He must practice in order to perform the craft components of his job. But to practice has always a double effect. It makes him, on the one hand, more able to do whatever it is he is attempting; and, on the other hand, by the phenomenon of habit formation, it makes him less aware of how he does it. If his attempt is to communicate about the unconscious components of his performance, then it follows that he is on a sort of moving stairway about whose position he is trying to communicate but whose movement is itself a function of his efforts to communicate. Clearly, his task is impossible, but, as has been remarked, some people do it very pretty.

p.141 The unconscious contains not only the painful matters which consciousness prefers not to inspect, but also many matters which are so familiar that we do not need to inspect them. Habit, therefore, is a major economy of conscious thought.

p.142 <HABIT & CHANGE>
Broadly, we can afford to sink those sorts of knowledge which continue to be true regardless of changes in the environment, but we must maintain in an accessible place all those controls of behavior which must be modified for every instance. The economics of the system, in fact, pushes organisms toward sinking into the unconscious those generalities of relationship which remain permanently true and toward keeping within the conscious the pragmatics of particular instances. The premises may, economically, be sunk, but particular conclusions must be conscious. But the sinking, though economical, is still done at a price - the price of inaccessibility. Since the level to which things are sunk is characterized by iconic algorithms and metaphor, it becomes difficult for the organism to examine the matrix out of which his conscious conclusions spring. Conversely, we may note that what is common to a particular statement and a corresponding metaphor is of a generality appropriate for sinking.

BATESON ON RESILIENCE OF LEARNING


Minimal requirements for a Theory of Schizophrenia (1959)
Learning Genetics and Evolution
Genetic Problems posed by Double Bind Theory
What is man?

p.246 In all of this, the hypothesis requires and reinforces that revision in scientific thought which has been occurring in many fields, from physics to biology. The observer must be included within the focus of observation, and what can be studied is always a relationship or an infinite regress of relationships. Never a “thing”.

p.253 There is a formidable gulf between the thinking of the experimental psychologist and the thinking of the psychiatrist or anthropologist. This gulf I believe to be due to the discontinuity in the hierarchical structure [between the second and third order of learning].

p.255 nature of thinking about change & learning

p.265 [Heraclitus, Blake, Lamarck and Samuel Butler] For these, the motive for scientific inquiry was the desire to build a comprehensive view of the universe which should show what Man is and how he is related to the rest of the universe. The picture which these men were trying to build was ethical and aesthetic.

The Group Dynamics of Schizophrenia (1960)

Role of mother-child (significant other(s)- self) relationship and confusion of mixed messages of different logical levels and double bind and schizophrenia

p.232 It is, I believe, this stability of the relationship between messages under the impact of the change in one part of the constellation that provides a basis for the French aphorism “Plus ca change, plus c’est la meme chose.”
Contributing to Learning to Change

[(16/7/2000) This is the concept of integrity essential for practicing change – and the need for such integrity to extend beyond one individual to the system-at-large ...]

p.233 Up to this point the realm of communication appears to be more and more complex, more flexible, and less amenable to analysis.

[(16/7/2000) the basis of post-modern critical analysis??]

Now the introduction of the group concept – the consideration of many persons – suddenly simplifies this confused realm of slipping and sliding meanings. If we shake up a number of irregular stones in a bag .. there will be a gradual simplification of the system – the stones will resemble one another. … Certain forms of homogenization result from multiple impact, even at the crude physical level, and when the impacting entities are organisms capable of complex learning and communication, the total system operates rapidly toward either uniformity or toward systematic differentiation – an increase of simplicity – which we call organization.

[(16/7/2000) idea of group cohesion by consensus (or coercion) and effective use of differential contributions of different skills]

p.243 I believe that this is the essence of the matter, that the schizophrenic family is an organization with great ongoing stability whose dynamics and inner workings are such that each member is continually undergoing the experience of negation of self.

[(16/7/2000) is our society at large, generally tending towards greater levels of schizophrenia??
[(16/7/2000) this is a useful comment to consider about how to go about change eg with CNHS – this group of four – respected, expertise honoured, open to expression of self, offering being heard to all, - if they can duplicate that with their contacts it will expand. But this experience and this expansion will be resisted since it unsettles the status quo – and who knows what that change will bring ... when that resistance and antipathy (note that relation to pathology?) is expressed how will the group respond/ react? .. what needs to be in place for it to be able to sustain its wellness in the face of the great illness of the system?]

[(16/7/2000) negation of self and self-awareness as my first step??!! – reaffirmation of self as being foundational and affirming expression of self as a value (note my value of self-control!!) and being comfortable with the conflict/ that arises from difference]

The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication 1964 + 1971

p.300 It is commonly observed that much of the Learning II which determines a patient’s transference patterns and, indeed, determines much of the relational life of all human beings, (a) dates from early infancy, and (b) is unconscious. Both of these generalizations seem to be correct and both need some explanation.

It seems probable that these two generalizations are true because of the very nature of the phenomena which we are discussing. We suggest that what is learned in Learning II is a way of punctuating events. But a way of punctuating is not true or false. There is nothing contained in the propositions of this learning that can be tested against reality. It is like a picture seen in an inkblot; it has neither correctness nor incorrectness. It is only a way of seeing the inkblot.

Consider the instrumental view of life. An organism with this view of life in a new situation will engage in trial-and-error behaviour in order to make the situation provide a positive reinforcement. If he fails to get this reinforcement, his purposive philosophy is not thereby negated. His trial-and-error behaviour will simply continue. The premises of “purpose” are simply not of the same logical type as the material facts of life, and therefore cannot easily be contradicted by them.

Double Bind, 1969

p.278 The story [of a dolphin’s learning] illustrates, I believe, two aspects of the genesis of a transcontextual syndrome:
First, that severe pain and maladjustment can be induced by putting a mammal in the wrong regarding its rules for making sense of an important relationship with another mammal.
And second, that if this pathology can be warded off or resisted, the total experience may promote creativity.